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“Rise of the Functionals?”:  
Mobility Air Force Developmental Teams and their Impact on  
Officer Education and Advancement

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



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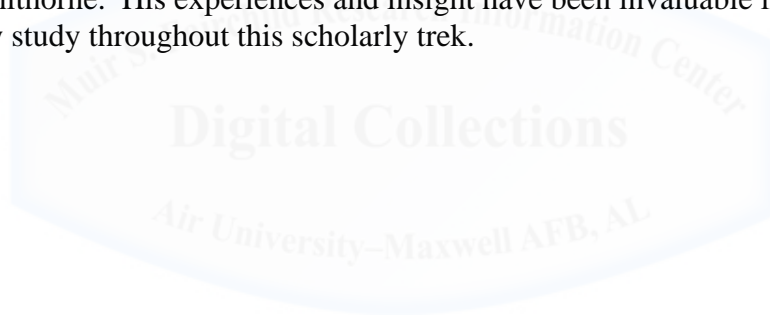


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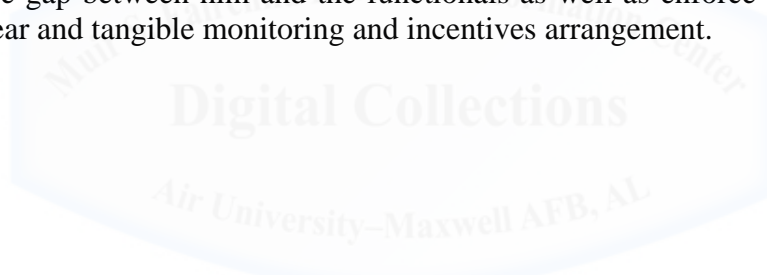
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the subordinate functional Air Force organizations that are responsible for officer development, the Developmental Teams (DTs). This paper analyzed the potential differences between what the CSAF viewed as important for officer professional military development with what the functional Mobility Air Force DTs focused on and emphasized. This thesis applied a principal-agent framework to study whether the MAF DT followed and implemented the CSAF's vision for selecting future Air Force leaders, especially regarding the selection process of MAF Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) and Senior Developmental Education (SDE) nominations. This research determined that the MAF DTs are often resistant to the CSAF's desires. However, the MAF DT's resistance was not the result of a nefarious scheme or extreme functional parochialism. Instead, DT members resorted to individual and organizational biases and desires when confronted with a lack of explicit, salient, and durable CSAF preferences. Similarly, the absence of enforceable incentives, both rewards and punishment, contributed to the MAF's resistance. Finally, the CSAF had no concrete monitoring arrangements to ensure the MAF DT was executing his delineated desires. In turn, the MAF DT tended to default to its own preferences when faced with conflicting guidance from the CSAF. If the CSAF wants guidance to be followed, he must minimize the preference gap between him and the functionals as well as enforce the desired behavior with a clear and tangible monitoring and incentives arrangement.





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## INTRODUCTION

Major Thomas White was the Aide to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. One June day, he had a few seconds to scan his numerous emails before escorting the Chief to his afternoon Joint Chiefs of Staff tank meeting with the Chairman. His eyes settled on one particular email. It was a forwarded note from a fellow Air Force aide, the subject read “Lieutenant Colonel Promotion List.” Major White’s heart fluttered, this was his promotion board. But he had no time to read it than as he needed to pick up the Chief for his next meeting.<sup>1</sup>

Six months earlier, the CSAF had called White into his office overlooking the Pentagon courtyard to discuss Major White’s performance. “Tom, I think you are doing a phenomenal job as my Aide and I think you need to be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. In fact, the reason I brought you in here today was to hand you this.” He opened a blue folder and handed him a copy of his Promotion Recommendation Form (PRF) for his upcoming below the primary zone (BPZ) Lieutenant Colonel Promotion Board. He paused for a few seconds to allow Major White to glance at the bottom line. Every officer in the Air Force knows that all early promotions largely hinge on two factors, the bottom line of the PRF and the Definitely Promote block. In this case, Major White noted the CSAF had marked with a pen the DP block. His eyes drifted towards the bottom line and he read it to himself, “My #1/333 Majors in the Air Force Headquarters.” In his mind, Major White screamed for joy, but outwardly he simply replied, “thank you Sir.” The Chief replied in jest, “hopefully my signature still holds weight in this Air Force, congratulations Tom.”

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<sup>1</sup> The names in this story have been change to protect those involved but the story is true. The events that happened were representative of actual events that occurred in the Air Force.

The CSAF intended this statement to be sarcastic, but behind it there was a lot of truth. The CSAF has the ability to promote any enlisted member at any time all the way up to Chief Master Sergeant. He also personally recommends to the Secretary of the Air Force and the President of the United States all the three and four-star officer nominations for the Air Force. He is also responsible for general officer recommendations to the Chairman for all joint general officer billets. Likewise, he either approves or handpicks assignments for all one and two star officers. The CSAF has enormous control over the enlisted and general officer ranks, and most people assume he has the same direct influence over the rest of the Air Force officer corps. But that is not the case. The CSAF does not have the direct ability to dictate the promotion of a field grade officer promotion, and there are limits to the CSAF's span of control within a large bureaucracy like the Air Force.

Much to the angst of the CSAF, Major White was not promoted BPZ to Lieutenant Colonel. Everyone in Headquarters who knew of the situation was shocked, but the most surprised was the CSAF. As a result, the CSAF grilled the three star Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (A1), and asked his staff to find out why Major White was not promoted. All were surprised to realize how little weight the CSAF's signature carried in this particular situation. The Chief could spot promote any enlisted airman, determine all general officer assignments, and influence all three and four star general officer selections, but he did not have the ability to dictate the promotion of a single Major.

There is a potential gap between what the CSAF believes is important and the Air Force bureaucracy actually executes. This story highlights the CSAF's limitations over

the promotion process. However, there are also limits to the CSAF's influence over specific functional groups. There is a tension between the leader's focus, values, and desires compared to the wishes, beliefs, and culture of subordinate functional entities. This tension appears to be a natural byproduct of a large organization, and can be healthy. But how much tension is too much? The Chief is human, makes errors, and his perspective, although broad, is limited to his eyes. What obligations and responsibilities do subordinate bureaucratic organizations have to both the Chief and the institution at large? Is there a shared responsibility between commanders and the functionals to achieve an optimal outcome for the Air Force? The Chief has the obligation to be clear and consistent in his guidance and the subordinate bureaucracy must in turn be responsive and obedient to execute the tasks dictated. For all parties, there should be active feedback loops to ensure consistent and transparent information, flowing up and down the hierarchy. Only when these two are intricately linked together and driving in the same direction will an organization exhibit internal congruence.

### **Purpose**

This thesis examines the relationship between the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the subordinate bureaucratic Air Force organizations. In particular, this paper analyzes the organizational and institutional differences between what the CSAF views as important for officer professional military development contrasted with what the functional bureaucracy places emphasis on and executes. More specifically, this paper examines whether the Mobility Air Force Developmental Teams (DT) adhere to and implements the CSAF's vision and intent for selecting Air Force leaders. This thesis studies whether the MAF Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) and Senior

Developmental Education (SDE) selections are reflective of the CSAF's guidance. This paper asks whether the MAF DT executes a process that selects future MAF leaders differently than what the CSAF envisions. If there is a difference, what explains this discrepancy? If the MAF DT deviates from the CSAF's guidance, is this due to an absence of clear guidance, or a willful departure? What mechanisms, either positive or negative, does the CSAF utilize to ensure the MAF DT executes his desired vision? Finally, what is the importance of the DT process? Does it really matter for officer development?

### **Research Question**

Using the structural framework of principal-agent theory, this research examines the relationship between Air Force leaders, particularly the CSAF, and sub-organizations, in this instance the MAF DT. This research studies the complex bureaucratic relationship between the principal and his subordinate agents. Specifically, this thesis asks: *is there consistency between the Air Force corporate vision and the functional Mobility Air Force Developmental Team selection process, particularly in regard to the IDE and SDE designation process? If there are inconsistencies between the two, what explains these differences?* This work assesses the numerous components of the Developmental Team process and attempts to analyze the wide spectrum of causality in the IDE and SDE selection process. The theoretical framework of principal-agent theory provides the intellectual basis to examine the structural variables within the CSAF-MAF DT relationship. Utilizing the principal-agent theory allows a greater understanding of the complex, diverse, and varied relationship.

## Outline

This study applies the framework of principal-agent theory to the relationship between the CSAF and the Developmental Process, aiming to examine the MAF DT as a mechanism that seeks to execute the Chief's vision of "developing innovative Airmen who find better and smarter ways to *fly, fight, and win*."<sup>2</sup>

Chapter 1 outlines the basic principles and terms of principal-agent theory. In its origins, economists used principal-agent theory in a variety of applications to explain contracts between parties. More recently, political scientists have used it to explain the characteristics and tensions within bureaucracies. Principal-agent theory focuses on the challenges of motivating the agents to act in the interests of the principal rather than focusing on their own self-serving interests. Chapter one explains the framework of principal-agent theory and how it overlays onto the dynamic relationship between the CSAF (the principal) and the MAF DT as the delegated agent.

Chapter 2 is segmented thrice. First, it examines the intellectual origins of developmental teams. Second, it investigates the creation and foundation of the DT process, and examines the iterative evolution of the DT during the past four CSAFs. Lastly, the chapter describes current operations of the DT as it is executed today.

Chapter 3 analyzes the CSAF guidance and delegation of the DT process. This chapter examines the directive DT guidance from the CSAF and his delegated proxies. Often the direction the DT receives from Air Force leadership is unclear and conflicts with other existing guidance. This chapter examines DT behavior in the absence of clear guidance. In this example, personalities, experiences, biases, and sub-organizational

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<sup>2</sup> CSAF, "The World's Greatest Airmen: A Vision for the United States Air Force," ed. HAF (Washington D.C.2013), 2.

culture filled the void of CSAF guidance. While both the principal and the agent appear to have a similar goal--namely to develop future Airmen to lead the Air Force--the path in which they attempt to execute this goal can appear to conflict. Initially, this seems an example of divergent goals, asymmetric information, or outright resistance on the part of the agents. However, the absence of clear guidance from the CSAF tends to cause the MAF DT to resort to the opinions of other senior individuals, personal experience, and organizational culture. This chapter analyzes the conduct of the DT in relation to the principal-agent dilemma.

Chapter 4 summarizes the essence of this thesis. This chapter assesses the DT as it is executed today and provides implications of the research. In a resource-constrained environment, who and what are best able to grow field grade officers into becoming the next generation of leaders? If the MAF DT is not always in line with executing the Chief's guidance, should the DTs be disbanded? If the MAF DT is disbanded, who or what organization fills that responsibility for mid-level officer designation and development? This chapter discusses the pertinent issues to find a balance between the CSAF's vision and the MAF DTs and concludes with a recommendation for future principal-agent relationships.

### **Limitations**

This principal-agent methodology has numerous limitations. It is impossible to examine complex human relationships and sequester situations into single variables. It is impossible to hold all other variables constant in order to analyze a sole variable. The number of factors that affect the outcome in this research are numerous. The author does not pretend to assume that an individual variable can explain the sole causality between



the CSAF and MAF DT principal-agent dilemma. Rather, many of the variables are fluid and interconnected to each other. Therefore, this thesis intends to identify *a* potential solution rather than *the* solution to the principal-agent dilemma between the CSAF and MAF DT.<sup>3</sup> This research is intended to be a sketch to explain the difference between what the CSAF may desire and what the DTs accomplish.

Second, there are limits when applying principal-agent theory to a large bureaucratic organization. In most cases, researchers apply principal-agent theory to situations involving two different agencies. The application of principal-agent in this research is different because the principal and agent are within the same ‘agency.’<sup>4</sup> While the CSAF and the MAF DT are both part of the Air Force, this paper contends there are different subsets within the larger organization. Chapter four further enumerates this complex relationship. Therefore, the CSAF and MAF DT may have similar interests not just because of the principal-agent relationship but also because they reside within the same institution (agency). This paper argues while both parties operate within the same macro organization, they are comprised of separate micro ‘agencies’ within the total organization.

Third, the examination of the CSAF-MAF DT relationship is not a simple classical game theory involving a single iteration. Rather, the relationship is a complex human interface that involves numerous repetitions and frequent interplay between both the agent and principal. These interactions can take place over a considerable period of

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Donnithorne, "Culture Wars: Air Force Culture and Civil-Military Relations" (Air University, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Jan-Erik Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective* (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2005). 26.

time, even as long as several years.<sup>5</sup> Typically, in single principal-agent exchanges, the players are constant. Normally, the examination of a principal-agent relationship was primarily designed for a single enumeration of game theory rather than for the repetitive and iterative nature of bureaucracies. Therefore, there are limits when overlaying principal-agent theory onto this complex situation. For example, in this research the positions of the principal and the agent are continuously changing. Moreover, humans are adaptive and learning beings that modify behaviors after every interaction. This research is focused on past interactions between the CSAF-MAF DT, and can provide but suggestions for the future because of the evolving and unique phenomenon of human behavior.

Lastly, as an active duty mobility officer, the author acknowledges personal bias. However, throughout the course of the research, data analysis, and interviews, the author attempted to maintain a substantial level of transparency and objectivity. Total impartiality is impossible when investigating one's own background and culture; however, the author attempted to examine the data through an objective lens and in turn limit the infusion of his own bias and prejudices.<sup>6</sup>

## **Summary**

This introduction opened with a true story that highlighted the CSAF's limitations within the Air Force institution. It outlined the purpose, research question, and methodology, and outlined subsequent chapters. Chapter one will provide an overview of principal-agent theory through a brief history, definitions, and its basic framework. The second half of chapter one will focus on how the principal-agent theory applies to the

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<sup>5</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*., 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> Donnithorne, "Culture Wars: Air Force Culture and Civil-Military Relations," 6. .

CSAF-MAF DT relationship and, more importantly, illuminates a broader understanding of these complex interactions.



# CHAPTER 1

## PRINCIPAL-AGENT THEORY

Theories and models are mechanisms to simplify complex relationships, concepts, or events and facilitate the elucidation of reality. By simplifying concepts and classifying core components, theories and models enable the explanation of difficult relationships and interactions between specific groups. Likewise, theories and models can reveal the implications of specific interactions and events. In the 1960s, economists were the first to develop principal-agent theory to explore risk sharing problems between cooperating parties. Economists used principal-agent theory to explain the dynamics of contract negotiations between two different groups.<sup>1</sup> This theory provided the basic reference framework to analyze the complex relationship between the principal and an agent who performs the task. In more recent years, political scientists have adopted variations of principal-agent theory to explain the characteristics of public service, bureaucracies, and civil-military relationships.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, principal-agent theory serves as a model to describe the intricacies of the CSAF-DTs relationship. Ultimately, this theory helps explain the complex interactions between the service leader and the military organization designated to groom the next generation of Air Force leaders.

This chapter provides a brief overview of principal-agent theory and explains the application of an agency model to the CSAF-MAF DT relationship. George E.P. Box, a wise statistician, once said, “essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," *The Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 1 (1989): 58.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 52-53.

<sup>3</sup> George E. P. Box and Norman Richard Draper, *Empirical Model-Building and Response Surfaces*, Wiley series in probability and mathematical statistics Applied probability and statistics (New York: Wiley, 1987). x. .

This research attempts to use principal-agent theory as a basic model to simplify a complex and multifaceted problem into a more manageable explanation of reality. The model's explanatory value is not all-encompassing. However, the intent of this research is to illuminate a clearer understanding of the relationship between the CSAF and MAF DT.

### **Principal-Agent Theory: An Overview**

A principal-agent relationship begins when the principal contracts work to be done which he cannot do or prefers not to do on his own. Often the principal lacks the appropriate resources or expertise to accomplish the task himself. Therefore, the *principal* hires an *agent* to complete the work on his behalf.<sup>4</sup> The agent is that individual or group of experts and/or specialists who execute the tasks delineated by the principal.<sup>5</sup> A homeowner who contracts with a moving company is an example of a principal-agent relationship. The homeowner could move all his goods himself, but that would require a lot of resources. He might not have the proper equipment, expertise, or manpower to expeditiously and precisely accomplish the move without damaging his goods. Therefore, the homeowner, as the principal, enters into a contract to pay movers to do the task on his behalf. The contract is the specified agreement that delineates the work that needs to be accomplished and specifies the subsequent rewards for the agent. Contracts between the principal and the agent can either be explicit, as in business scenarios like the movers example, or implicit, such as bureaucratic governmental relationships.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 58. .

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Jacques Laffont and David Martimort, *The Theory of Incentives: The Principal-Agent Model* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002). 1.

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 46-47.

There are several terms that are particular to principal-agent theory. In this thesis, *asymmetric information* is defined as the agent's information advantage over the principal.<sup>7</sup> For example, the agent may have expert information on the task completion that the principal does not. Conversely, the principal may either intentionally or unintentionally withhold information from the agents, both during the contract negotiation phase and execution of the task.<sup>8</sup> *Preferences gaps* are defined as the difference between how the principal desires the task accomplished and how the agent would prefer to complete the task.<sup>9</sup> A *moral hazard* exists when an agent takes risks that they themselves will not incur.<sup>10</sup> For example, the movers previously highlighted may carelessly handle the principal's furniture in order to quickly finish the move, because any ensuing damage payments are paid by the parent moving company and not by the movers themselves. Therefore as they are not penalized for sloppy work, they will make careless decisions because another party bears the consequences. Greg Miller argues that only "agents can exhibit moral hazard, because the formal responsibility is strictly unidirectional."<sup>11</sup> Finally, *monitoring* is the process that the principal uses to observe the agent's actions with regard to task completion.<sup>12</sup>

The next area to outline in principal-agent theory is cost. Cost affects the principal and agent differently and is a key variable in the principal-agent relationship. The principal wants to maximize the agent's effort in order to achieve the positive task

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<sup>7</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 16, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*., 16, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Gary J. Miller, "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models," *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 8(2005): 205.

<sup>10</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 258-60.

<sup>11</sup> Miller, "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models," 220.

<sup>12</sup> Roy Radner, "Monitoring Cooperative Agreements in a Repeated Principal-Agent Relationship," *Econometrica* 49, no. 5 (1981): 1128.

accomplishment, while still minimizing the overall situational costs.<sup>13</sup> The agent seeks to minimize his efforts required to execute the task in order to realize the maximum gain from the contract. Because the principal is not actually executing the task, he must place some faith in the individual agent to accomplish the work in concurrence with his specified or implied interests.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, *incentives* are an important mechanism that the principal can use to reward or punish the agent for contract compliance. These incentives can act to influence behavior. The principal can motivate the agent through incentives so the agent accomplishes work in strict compliance with the principal's desires. The incentives in the private principal-agent relationships "tend to be self-centered" and focused on economic benefits.<sup>15</sup> However, the incentives of public or institutional principal-agent interactions tend to "include intangibles such as well-being of the nation, economic growth, community development, peace and prosperity."<sup>16</sup> The institutional principal-agent relationship tends to value the contribution to the entire organization rather than the selfish motives of individual wealth, reputation, prestige and power. The institutional principal tends to desire a positive collective output that promotes the overall increased well-being of the establishment.

In any principal-agent interaction, a principal can apply two types of specific incentives: *outcome-based* or *behavior-based*.<sup>17</sup> Within these sub-sets of incentives, there can be two additional types, positive or negative. Positive incentives encourage,

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<sup>13</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 15.

<sup>14</sup> Tore Ellingsen and Magnus Johannesson, "Pride and Prejudice: The Human Side of Incentive Theory," *The American Economic Review* 98, no. 3 (2008): 991.

<sup>15</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 52-53.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective* 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 62.

reward, and reinforce the agents for task accomplishment. Negative incentives emphasize discipline, punishments and reprimands for behavior that does not reflect the principal's desires. The old idiom of the carrot and the stick highlight the relationship of positive and negative incentives.

Outcome-based incentives are those where agents are compensated at the completion of the service. Household movers paid at the conclusion of each move are an example of outcome based rewards. The agents, in this case the movers, are compelled to the same goal as the principal, in this case the move from house A to house B. An outcome-based reward structure tends to increase the alignment between the principal and the agent's interests to ensure task completion. However, the level of risk the agents assume is also high because outside circumstances can greatly affect the difficulty of the contract accomplishment, and are often accompanied by increased rewards. These outside influences can dramatically impact the level of required effort from the movers if their contracted rewards remain constant.<sup>18</sup>

Behavior-based incentives are different. Movers who are paid by the hour to move goods from house A to house B are an example of behavior-based rewards. However, if the principal does not maintain a high monitoring arrangement, the agents may tend to lengthen the amount of time required to complete the task and fulfill the contract. This is because the movers are incentivized to prolong the duration of the contract. While the movers are still moving the household goods, they will prefer to focus more on perceived action rather than task completion. In a behavior-based rewards structure, it is the principal who assumes the majority of the uncertainty and risk for task

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<sup>18</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 62.



completion. Ultimately, a principal should utilize a combination of both incentive structures to ensure optimal contract accomplishment and the minimization of risk for both parties.<sup>19</sup>

However, before rewarding or punishing an agent, the principal must have accurate information on the agent's task compliance or lack thereof. A mechanism the principal can use to ensure precise contract completion is to intensely *monitor* the agent's behavior. *High monitoring* requires the principal observe intently and then demand promptly the agent's compliance to complete the desired task.<sup>20</sup> High monitoring enables the principal to then regulate the behavior of the agent through either positive or negative incentives.

Both incentives and monitoring come at some additional cost to the principal. The principal would prefer the agents execute the contract without any extra expenditure, but this scenario is not always probable or realistic. The principal would prefer to hire cooperative agents that clearly execute the contract as specified without high monitoring; however, the principal does not often have access to perfect agents.<sup>21</sup> In the moving example, a homeowner has a myriad of movers to select from if the principal sees noncompliance. However, in a bureaucratic government relationship, a principal's options for agents may be limited to single agent.<sup>22</sup>

Agents also tend to appear more hard-working in the contract negotiation phase than during the actual task execution. If there is conflict in the contract negotiation

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<sup>19</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 60-62.

<sup>20</sup> John W. Pratt, Richard Zeckhauser, and Kenneth Joseph Arrow, *Principals and Agents: The Structure of Business* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1991). 3.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). 314.

<sup>22</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: xi.

phase, the agent may not agree to accomplish the task according to the principal's desires. Conversely, if there is no conflict in contract negotiations, then the agent will tend to comply with the principal's desires, regardless of whether or not the principal monitors the agent's behavior.<sup>23</sup> Principal-agent theory delineates these situations as agent *working* or agent *shirking*.<sup>24</sup> Peter Feaver describes shirking in the civil-military relationship as the agent not doing the task according to the principal's satisfaction. Jan-Erik Lane also defines shirking as an agent "taking one wage according to an agreement" but then putting "in another lower level of effort."<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Peter Feaver describes working as the "good faith effort to represent the principal's interest."<sup>26</sup> More broadly, "working is the ideal conduct that the agent would perform if the principal had full knowledge of what the agent could do and was in fact doing."<sup>27</sup> One problem with the *working* and *shirking* terminology of principal-agent theory is that the term shirking carries a negative connotation within the English language. Similarly, within the context of a rule following hierarchical military structure, some may see shirking as a pejorative term. Therefore, I use one scholar's terminology of *compliance* in lieu of working and *resistance* to replace shirking.<sup>28</sup> The action of *resistance* is where the agents avoid, oppose, or thwart the principal's task accomplishment. The term resistance implies a level of willful non-compliance; however, resistance can also include an agent's passive resistance. On the other hand, *compliance* means the agent is executing the principal's task in strict obedience and agreement.

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<sup>23</sup> Miller, "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models," 205.

<sup>24</sup> Laffont and Martimort, *The Theory of Incentives: The Principal-Agent Model*: 175.

<sup>25</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 260.

<sup>26</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*: 60.

<sup>27</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*: 61

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Donnithorne, "Principled Agents: Service Culture, Bargaining, and Agency in American Civil-Military Relations," School of Arts and Sciences (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2013), 13.

One reason agents resist the principal is because they perceive resistance as more in line with their optimal interests or agenda. Compliance and resistance must be examined from both the agent and principal's perspectives. From the agent's viewpoint, he may choose to resist because he believes the principal has unreasonable, unrealistic and unachievable demands regarding task accomplishment. Complete compliance may in fact be unattainable. Therefore, the agent may seek to select the best option, thereby optimizing the perceived outcome.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, examined from the principal's perspective, the agent's resistance may appear as insubordinate and willful disobedience. Arguably each side would contest the other is right. In theory, it would appear as black and white: the agent is either compliant or resisting. However, there is significant gray around the analysis of agent compliance and resistance. In reality, there are often other factors that explain the various nuances of an agent's behavior. The absence of specified clear and consistent guidance from the principal, for example, may tend to result in the appearance of agent resistance.

There are primarily two methods to address the cooperation and resistance conundrum facing the principal and agents.<sup>30</sup> The first method, to prevent divergence in the principal's desires and agent's behavior, is to clearly align the interests of both parties in the contract negotiation phase. Attaining early "buy in" from both the principal and agent before executing the contract can help ensure a smooth transition into the execution phase; if the preferences, rewards, punishments, and monitoring arrangements are agreed upon during the contract negotiation phase, then all involved parties have an increased

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<sup>29</sup> Paul Weirich, *Realistic Decision Theory: Rules for Nonideal Agents in Nonideal Circumstances* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). 3.

<sup>30</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 59.

incentive to cooperate during the execution phase.<sup>31</sup> The second method to resolve principal-agent difficulties is to alter the on-going compensation and information flow to minimize uncertainty and risk between the principal and the agent.<sup>32</sup> Uncertainty and risk can creep into all contracts; however, ensuring adaptable contracts that can account for ambiguity can enable successful task accomplishment that can benefit both the principal and the agent. The requirement in both these methods is active transparent communication and engagement down from the principal and up from the agent. With an active dialogue, the principal-agent relationship is more likely to be fruitful for both the agent and the principal.<sup>33</sup>

The purpose of this section was to outline the principal-agent theory and provide an intellectual framework to build on in subsequent chapters. Principal-agent theory simplifies and explains an intricate relationship that might otherwise not be readily understood. The relationship between the principal and the agent is always dynamic and evolving. Therefore, the principal's use of monitoring and the application of incentives, both positive and negative, are powerful tools to ensure both agent compliance and optimal task completion with minimal cost. This next section builds on the initial principal-agent framework and applies the theory to the specific CSAF-MAF DT relationship.

### **Principal-Agent and Air Force DT Framework**

This section overlays the principal-agent framework to the delegated relationship inherent between the CSAF and MAF DT. The Presidentially appointed and

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<sup>31</sup> Sarah Kaplan and Rebecca Henderson, "Inertia and Incentives: Bridging Organizational Economics and Organizational Theory," *Organization Science* Vol 16 no. No. 5 (2005): 510.

<sup>32</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 58.

<sup>33</sup> Kaplan and Henderson, "Inertia and Incentives: Bridging Organizational Economics and Organizational Theory," 510.

Congressionally approved leader of the Air Force is the Chief of Staff. DoD directives mandate the Chief should “organize, train, equip, and provide air, space, and cyber forces for the conduct of prompt and sustained combat operations.”<sup>34</sup> Intrinsic to these duties is the CSAF’s responsibility to develop airmen. While the growth of all airmen is the CSAF’s responsibility, the CSAF has neither the time nor the expertise to develop each and every functional airman in the Air Force. With 332,854 active airmen, 185,522 civilians, 71,400 reserve airmen, and 106,700 air guard personnel, the CSAF is responsible for force development but he is incapable of personally ensuring the accomplishment. Really, the CSAF barely has enough time and resources to manage the 317 general officers, much less the 27,996 active duty field grade officers in the Air Force.<sup>35</sup> However, the CSAF is responsible for the development of all airmen to ensure the next generation of officers and enlisted are available and ready to lead the Air Force. The sheer enormity of this task is daunting. Therefore, the CSAF delegates authority for these tasks to commanders and functional organizations within the Air Force bureaucracy, but he still maintains responsibility for their development. It is in this delegation where the principal-agent theory applies.

As in principal-agent theory, the principal is unable to accomplish the task himself; therefore, he delegates the authority to the agent beneath him. However, in a large bureaucracy, organizational lines are not always crisp and clean. In reality, within the Air Force bureaucracy, there are direct command lines, functional pressures, and

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<sup>34</sup> DODD 5100.01, "Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components," ed. DoD (Washington D.C.2012).

<sup>35</sup> Magazine, Air Force. "Air Force Almanac " Vol. 96 No. 5 (2012), Accessed on 23 March 2014. <http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/Magazine%20Documents/2013/May%202013/0513intro.pdf>.

hierarchical influences. As information passes down from the principal to agents, various entities outside the principal himself can have influence on delegated agents.

This thesis focuses on the specific delegation of field grade officer development. The CSAF, acting as the principal, delegates his professional officer development to his Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, (A1). However, mid-level officer development is not the only function within the scope of responsibility of the A1 responsibility. The A1 is also a single individual charged with oversight of the entire spectrum of Air Force manpower, from airman basic to four-star general. This one individual cannot single-handedly execute the development of all mid-level officers to meet the CSAF's goal of "developing innovative Airmen."<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the A1 further delegates authority to the staff general officer functional managers. These functional managers further delegate the oversight, guidance and growth of their individual mid-level officers to their specific functional community. Functional community members sit on boards called the Development Teams (DT). DT consists of eight to ten senior officers within the specific functional community and is always chaired by a general officer.<sup>37</sup> These functional DTs, through the delegation from the CSAF, become the *agents* that execute the task of officer development for the CSAF (Figure 1).

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<sup>36</sup> CSAF, "The World's Greatest Airmen: A Vision for the United States Air Force."

<sup>37</sup> HAF/A1D, "AF/A1 Force Development Guidance " (Washington DC2013).

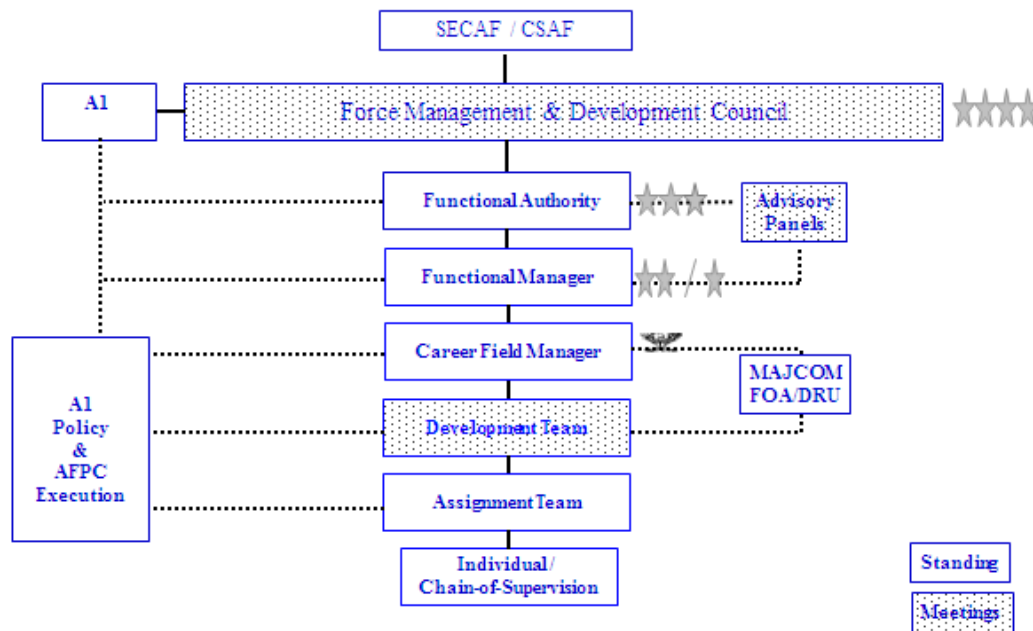


Figure 1: Corporate Force Development Structure

*Source:* AFI 36-2640

There are currently 28 separate officer DTs within the Air Force, but the MAF DT is the specific agent delineated in this study. In this case, the CSAF, through the A1, delegates a specific aspect of force management for mid-level MAF officers to the MAF DT. In turn, the CSAF's expectation is for the MAF-DT to select, develop, and groom these airmen to become the next generation of Air Force leaders and meet the CSAF's vision. Therefore, the group of senior MAF officers acts on behalf of the Chief to accomplish this task. Therefore, the MAF DT becomes the directed agent for mobility officer development.

In applying the principal-agent theory to the CSAF-MAF DT relationship, an important component of the principal-agent relationship is the preference gap. A preference gap is the difference between the interests of the principal and that of the agent with regard to task accomplishment. The synchronization of the principal and agent's preferences are crucial to the success of officer development. If the CSAF

desires one outcome and the MAF DT desires another, then the two groups are at odds and *resistance* will occur. However, if both the principal and agent have compatible or even complementary interests, then the agents are more likely to act with compliance. The MAF DT's resistance can come in two forms, willful or passive. Willful resistance is when the MAF DT intentionally disobeys the CSAF in executing the task; passive resistance is when an agent does not comply with the principal's desires, but the resistance is due to factors that are often outside the agent's control. When the MAF DT is following the guidance of the CSAF for force development, it can be said that they are in *compliance* with the principal-agent contract. However, when DT deviates from the CSAF's directives or his intent, then the MAF DT is *resisting*.<sup>38</sup>

Likewise, incentives can influence the DT's compliance and resistance. Incentives, both positive and negative, provide a powerful mechanism to shape and manipulate the behavior of the DT. Positive incentives are further delineated as outcome-based or behavior-based rewards. For outcome-based incentives in the MAF DT relationship, the CSAF would reward the DT for results that are most in line with his desires for mid-level officer development. For behavior based incentives, the CSAF would reward the DT, either collectively or the individual panel officers, for their time on the DT rather than the quality of their work. In this example, the CSAF would punish the DT, members or group, if they do not execute his desires for officer development.

Information asymmetry and monitoring are also critical components within the principal-agent relationship.<sup>39</sup> In the CSAF-MAF DT relationship, information asymmetry happens when the MAF DT withholds information from the CSAF regarding

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<sup>38</sup> Donnithorne, "Principled Agents: Service Culture, Bargaining, and Agency in American Civil-Military Relations," 13.

<sup>39</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 58.



officer development. This withheld information may be critical guidance that the CSAF needs but does not provide.

Another critical aspect of the CSAF-MAF DT relationship is monitoring. Monitoring occurs when the CSAF establishes a separate process to observe the MAF DT's behavior and task completion. Instinctively, the action of monitoring appears helpful because it allows the principal to maintain visibility over agents. However, monitoring can lead to a predicament for the CSAF. In order to apply successfully positive and negative incentives to the MAF DT, the CSAF requires *high monitoring* arrangements to assess the agent's compliance with the CSAF's desires. These high monitoring processes or individuals increase the cost of task of completion. The cost increases because the principal must designate more personnel to oversee the agent's behavior and report directly back to the principal. Martin Van Creveld, in *Command in War*, describes this need for subordinate accountability in his phrase "directed telescopes."<sup>40</sup> Van Creveld describes directed telescopes as "practiced, trusted observers" engaged in independent monitoring of subordinates "to keep them in check."<sup>41</sup> These outside observers are critical for a commander's visibility and control. High monitoring helps ensure the MAF DT's task accomplishment and enables the application of positive or negative incentives; however, it also adds additional personnel to the process which in turn increases the cost to officer development.

The CSAF-MAF DT principal-agent example is a simplification of a complex and evolving relationship. During the past ten years, since the creation of the DT, the relationship between these two has been dynamic. Every four years the Air Force

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<sup>40</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985). 45.

<sup>41</sup> Van Creveld, *Command in War*, 45.Ibid., 175.

replaces the principal through the nomination of a new CSAF. Each of the CSAF's had different visions for force development. Similarly, the composition of the DTs is always changing. The DTs try and maintain consistent functional member attendance, but the reality is their participants frequently change. To add to the complexity of the evolving relationship, countless other variables affect their relationship: functional pressures, hierarchical influences, individual personalities, and cultural motivations. This thesis uses the principal-agent theory "to explain a trend rather than to record every individual peculiarity encountered over several hundred cases" within the CSAF-MAF DT relationship.<sup>42</sup> Overall, the relationship between the CSAF and the MAF DT is a fluid relationship with numerous variables that affect cooperation and resistance. However, the application of principal-agent theory provides a basic framework to analyze the complex interactions between these two parties.

To analyze the CSAF-MAF DT relationship, this thesis examines three independent variables: preferences, incentives, and monitoring. This research assesses how changes in these three variables may result in an increase or decrease in the agent's compliance or resistance with regard to task completion. Hypothetically, a principal who enters into a contract with an agent that includes high incentives (either positive or negative), high monitoring, and low preference gaps, should yield agent compliance with regard to task completion. However, if a principal enters into a contract that has low incentives, low monitoring, and high preference gaps, then the principal should normally experience resistance.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago: From Mao to Bin Laden* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). 208.

<sup>43</sup> Lt Col Jeffrey Donnithorne, "Personal Communications," (Maxwell AFB, AL2013).

However, in actual application the variables are never this clear cut or simple. What happens when there are low incentives, a low preference gap, and low monitoring? Will an agent resist or comply? Similarly, there also are varying degrees of compliance and resistance. Compliance and resistance is not binary, either on or off. In actuality, an agent may tend to comply ‘most of the time’ or resist ‘some of the time.’ It is in these unclear and ambiguous situations that this research will attempt to examine.

In summary, chapter one provided an overview of principal-agent theory. The second half of this chapter focused on how the principal-agent theory overlays onto the CSAF-MAF DT relationship. Chapter two will focus on the origins of the DT and examine its current role in officer development.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE DEVELOPMENTAL TEAM BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

#### The Origin of Developmental Teams

While the creation of the Developmental Teams occurred in 2003, the intellectual underpinnings for them started well before. During the 1990s, the Air Force found itself in a personnel predicament which led to significant force development changes. The challenge was a drastic mismatch between the qualifications of current Air Force senior officers and the job requirements for officers with diverse backgrounds and job experiences for high-ranking positions.<sup>1</sup> Bluntly put, the Air Force was inadequate in competing for Joint officer positions at the Colonel and General officer level.<sup>2</sup>

There were primarily three reasons why the Air Force was having officer development difficulties in the 1990s. First, the Air Force development system was not mature and rigorous enough to provide a wide range of qualified officers with various backgrounds. Unfortunately, the Air Force was trapped in various officer “tribes” that rarely crossed into other career fields and obtained varied experiences. For example, a fighter pilot grew up within the fighter pilot community. A fighter pilot would start as a Lieutenant and rise to the rank of General, without being properly exposed to challenges and opportunities outside of their specific career field.<sup>3</sup> As such, these individual officers became “tribe” or functional centric.<sup>4</sup> One service analysis identified only 23 percent of 2,800 line Colonels with diverse secondary skills, compared with a DoD requirement for

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<sup>1</sup> RAND, "Aligning the Stars Improvements to General and Flag Officer Management," *RAND Report* (2004).

<sup>2</sup> General (Ret.) Roger Brady (USAFE/CC and prior HAF/A1), in discussion with the author, February 2014.

<sup>3</sup> General (Ret.) Roger Brady (USAFE/CC and prior HAF/A1), in discussion with the author, February 2014.

<sup>4</sup> These individual “Tribes” include specific functional areas. Some of these include Bomber, Recon, Fighter, MAF, SOF, Missile, RPA etc.

58 percent.<sup>5</sup> Not only did the Air Force not have any consistent institutional mechanisms to analyze these functional “tribe” members, it could not direct individuals outside of their functional areas or ensure the long-term health of the functional career.

Second, the Air Force did not have a robust and codified process to develop the next generation of officers before they reached the rank of Colonel. Each of the Air Force MAJCOMs viewed force development differently, and placed various levels of prioritization on officer force development. In many ways, the Air Force was not purposeful and deliberate in its institutional force development. Instead, the Air Force had a varied mix of individual force development programs. In 1989 the Air Force had approximately 571,000 personnel, and so the Air Force had the luxury of a relatively large officer candidate pool that required less active management.<sup>6</sup> With less than one percent of officers attaining general officer, the Air Force had a wide range of officers from which to select. However, over the course of the next decade the Air Force dramatically slashed its personnel size. By 2002 the service had less than 368,000 personnel in uniform, a 35% drop in a decade. Likewise, frequent deployments and a robust 1990s economy yielded a drain of officer talent.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, the lack of a deliberate development process combined with a decrease in the overall number of officers reached a fever pitch by 2003.

The third reason the Air Force had difficulty in the 1990s with officer development was due to Goldwater-Nichols Act personnel changes. The landmark 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act passed by Congress was one of the most sweeping changes to the

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<sup>5</sup> RAND, "Advancing the U.S. Air Force's Force-Development Initiative," *RAND Report* (2007): xiv.

<sup>6</sup> ———, "Understrength Air Force Officer Career Fields A Force Management Approach," *RAND Report* (2004): xii.

<sup>7</sup> ———, "Understrength Air Force Officer Career Fields A Force Management Approach," *RAND Report* (2004): xiii-1.

national security landscape. The Act had a broad impact on officer force development. The Act required prospective general officers to have served at least two years in a Joint officer position.<sup>8</sup> While this law was passed in 1986, it required a full generation of new officers before it took effect within the Air Force, and the Air Force continued to prioritize their individual headquarters over the Joint positions.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it was not until the 1990s before this new joint requirement truly impacted the careers of Air Force general officer candidates.

By the end of the 1990s, Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Ryan recognized the immensity of the problem and stated, “transforming officer development is more important to the Air Force’s future than acquiring the F-22 and the JSF. It will be harder to do, and there is a greater risk of failure.”<sup>10</sup> No longer could the Air Force be cavalier about officer force development. Instead, with a shrinking pool of future leaders and an increase in requirement for operational diversity, the Air Force needed to precisely, deliberately and proactively address force development for the upcoming generation. Even though General Ryan realized the need for a change, few changes come quickly in a large institution. In 2000, following a gathering of four-star Air Force officers, General Ryan instituted a “Developing Aerospace Leaders (DAL)” initiative in an attempt to address purposefully the deficiencies and “improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and clarity of the force-development process.”<sup>11</sup>

General John Jumper assumed the CSAF position from General Ryan in 2001 and continued to push for a force development transformation to address the deficiencies in

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<sup>8</sup> *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, 99-433, (October 1 1986), 36.

<sup>9</sup> HAF/A1D, “Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study,” (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> HAF/A1D, “Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study,” (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> HAF/A3/5, “Implementation of Force Development Responsibilities--Rated Developmental Team Charter,” (Washington DC: HAF/A3/5, 2002).

the 1990s. By the middle of 2002, General Jumper directed the establishment of the “Developed Enterprise Leader,” which incorporated a functional subject matter expert into the officer development process.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, General Jumper directed the Air Force Personnel Center and the A1 to examine the concept of establishing functional organizations to guide officer career paths. By the end of 2002, General Jumper’s desire for transformation resulted in a cascade of sweeping force changes across the Air Force and directly led to the release of a CSAF’s Sight Picture (Figure 2). General Jumper believed that force development was not just about developing future leaders for the Air Force, it was equally important to ensure Airmen were always learning and improving.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 2: General Jumper’s Sight Picture

Source: AFPC Force Development Branch Guide on Force Development

<sup>12</sup> RAND, “Advancing the U.S. Air Force’s Force-Development Initiative,” xiv.

<sup>13</sup> HAF/A1D, “Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study,” (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).

Two thousand and three was a monumental year for Air Force force developmental initiatives. The CSAF's vision propelled the Air Force to transform and codify its development process. General Jumper wanted to shift the Air Force focus from developing airmen with narrow backgrounds to growing airmen that have broad and versatile perspectives. His desire was to move airmen from entrenched "career stovepipes" to "interchangeable senior leaders."<sup>14</sup> He wanted to establish the Air Force development system as a "systemic, deliberate development."<sup>15</sup> In addition to the CSAF's strategic vision, General Jumper directed numerous policy changes: the establishment of a general officer led Force Development Council (FMDC), a revamp and update to the entire professional military education from Air and Space Basic Course to senior developmental education, the establishment of a codified system to develop leaders in both primary and secondary skillsets, the masking of master's degrees on the Major promotion board, a conscious selection process of officers for education and development not just PME, a decoupling of the promotion and PME results, and finally the creation of DTs.<sup>16</sup> The CSAF intended the DT's to address specifically the "career stovepipes" and establish a senior functional core to develop deliberately the future officers across the entire force.<sup>17</sup> AFPC published the first DT member guide and hosted the first DT in 2004 at San Antonio, Texas. By early 2005, the DTs started managing nominations for both IDE/SDE and individual squadron commanders. By the end of 2005, the DTs were responsible for vectoring officers into specific skill pairing

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<sup>14</sup> HAF/A1D, "Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).

<sup>15</sup> HAF/A1D, "Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> HQ AFPC/DPAFF, "Force Development Branch Guide on Force Development," (Randolph AFB, TX: AFPC, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> HAF/A1D, "Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).



positions.<sup>18</sup> After General Jumper retired, the DTs continued to mature but at a much slower pace. From 2005 to 2009 there were little changes in the DT. However, in 2009 the Air Force Reserves conducted their first officer DT. Similarly, in 2012 the Air Force established enlisted and civilian DTs.<sup>19</sup>

Developing airmen was not a radically new concept that originated in 2003. Earlier, Air Force leaders acknowledged the importance of force development. However, General Jumper formalized and codified force development in the DT process. In the years since, the force development system has seen numerous iterations, tweaks and slight changes; however, the fundamental concept of DTs started in 2003 under General Jumper's 2003 CSAF Sight picture and has remained largely unchanged.<sup>20</sup>

### **What is the DT's role in force development?**

There are three unique aspects of the entire force development umbrella: officers, enlisted, and civilian. General Jumper's force development initiative covered all three aspects of the Air Force, but this paper focuses upon the officer force development aspect of DTs. DTs serve as the conduit between the force development systems, the functional and institutional personnel requirements, and the individual service members. AFI 36-2640 states "DTs play a critical role in developing officers to support current and projected mission capabilities."<sup>21</sup> DTs have four direct roles<sup>22</sup> with regard to officer development: nominating individuals for professional military education (IDE/SDE),

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<sup>18</sup> AFPC/DPAFF, "Force Development Branch Guide on Force Development."

<sup>19</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2014).

<sup>20</sup> General (Ret.) Roger Brady (USAFE/CC and prior HAF/A1), in discussion with the author, February 2014.

<sup>21</sup> USAF/A1D, "Air Force Instruction 36-2640," ed. HQ/USAF/A1D (Washington DC2011).

<sup>22</sup> Note: There is not one single source document that clearly outlines the specific roles of the DT. These four specified tasks are a synthesis of key points from a variety of documents. However, these four specified and two implied tasks have been reinforced by numerous documents and interviews of panel members.

boarding officers for squadron command, vectoring of individuals (also known as steady state vectoring), and ensuring the overall functional balance and growth of future officers for that career.<sup>23</sup> In addition to these four specified DT roles, the DT also accomplishes two unspecified tasks which will be discussed later.

The first directed role of the DTs is the selection of officer professional military education (PME) nominees.<sup>24</sup> In this capacity, the DT meets, typically once a year, to select officers who were nominated by their senior raters for consideration to attend either Intermediate or Senior Developmental Education. Each functional DT is assigned a particular numerical limit to the total officers they can recommend to the Developmental Education Designation Board (DEDB). The numbers of nominees a DT can endorse to the DEDB varies each year based on the total education slots, the number of competing individuals, the size of that officer year group, and the size of the individual functional career field at the time. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of IDE slots broken out by percentages for each DT. The MAF DT is double circled below and represents 99 slots out of 618 in a typical year. Figure 4 shows the SDE slots. All the individual DTs make their recommendations and send their nominees to the collective DEDB, which is usually chaired by the HAF/A1. The DEDB typically follows the recommendations of the DTs and makes two determinations: the final selection list and the specific school that an individual attends.

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<sup>23</sup> HAF/A1D, "Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study."

<sup>24</sup> The Air Force has largely used PME and Intermediate or Senior Developmental Education interchangeably. These two terms are in fact slightly different. However, the essence of the two terms is the same. Therefore, the intent of this paper is simply to imply that PME and IDE/SDE are the mid-level officer development schools.

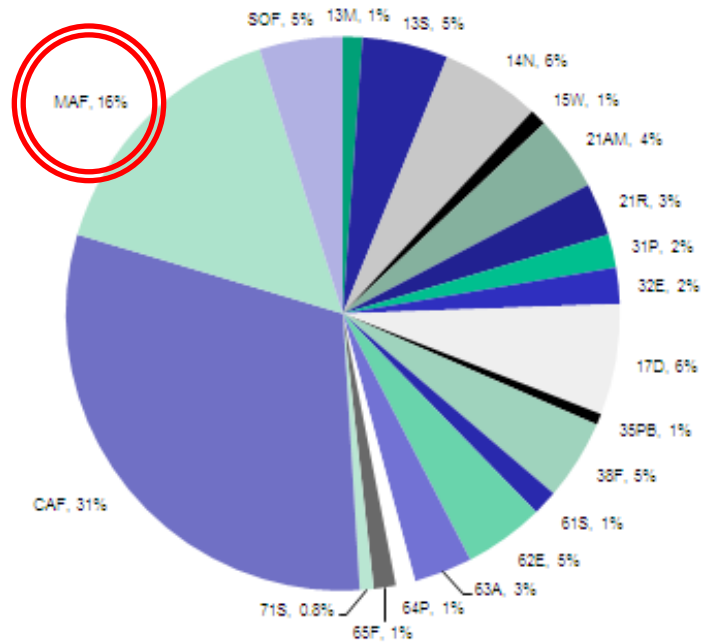


Figure 3: 2011 IDE DT Distribution Percentages Out of 618 Seats

Note: MAF is the second largest DT

Source: Development Discussion Slides HAF/A3/5

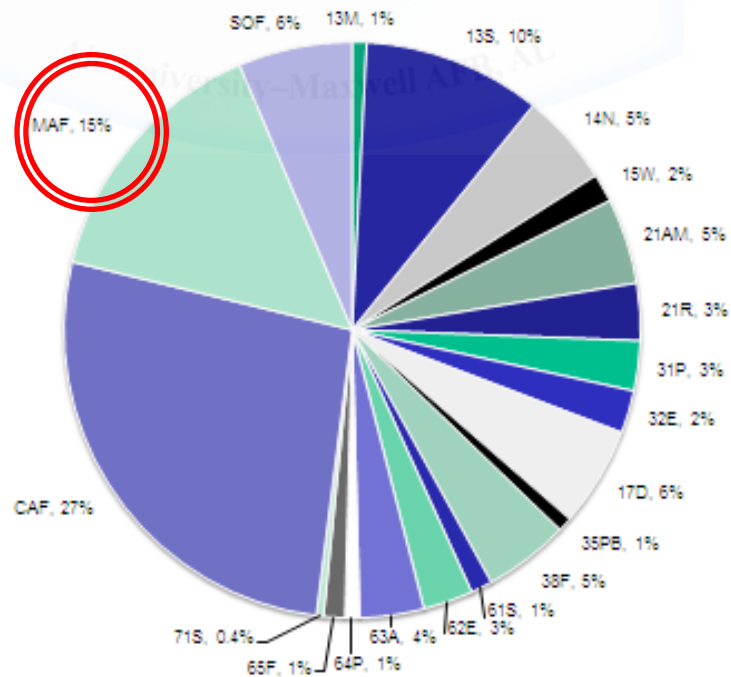


Figure 4: 2011 SDE DT Distribution Percentages Out of 250 Seats

Source: Development Discussion Slides HAF/A3/5

The second responsibility of the DT is boarding all eligible candidates for squadron command positions. The DTs again meet once a year to match eligible officers to squadron command slots. The DTs review eligible officers based on grade, AFSC, performance, and time of service. Some DTs, like the CAF, MAF and SOF boards, require an individual's senior rater to nominate them in order to compete on the board. However, other DTs, like the Logistics, Maintenance, Scientist, do not require the officers to be nominated by a senior rater and all officers meeting eligibility criteria are considered by the DT.<sup>25</sup> The DTs examine this pool of officers and only provides 1 to n list of names based on their past performance and demonstrated future potential to serve as commanders. Some of the smaller DTs will go so far as to recommend specific names to upcoming vacancies.<sup>26</sup> However, most DTs provide only a rank order *1 to n* list that allows the squadron commander hiring authority, who is typically the Wing Commander, to select his individual squadron commanders from the DTs-provided candidate list.<sup>27</sup>

The third responsibility of the DTs is vectoring. Vectoring is where the DTs review officer records by examining their past assignments, job performance, training and education; then DTs make recommendations for that specific officer's future career path. The purpose of vectoring is to ensure the next generation of functional officers has the right experiences, jobs, education, and skills to fill the future Air Force and Joint position requirements. Figure 5 highlights the officer career path pyramid, as it starts broadly with a large base of people and quickly funnels down as the rank levels increase.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with HAF Staff, January 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with HAF Staff, January 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with MAF DT Chair, Feb 2014.

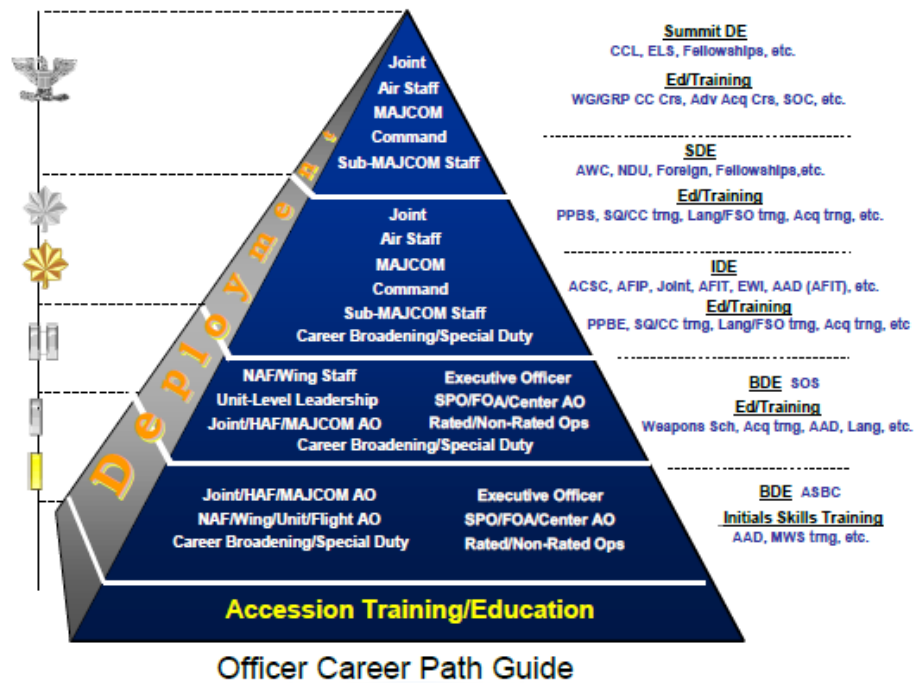


Figure 5: Officer Career Path Guide

Source: AF36-2640

The vector process typically results in three outcomes, or outputs. First, the DT provides AFPC with a list of recommended future career positions, education, or jobs the assignment teams should seek to match with an individual. The AFPC vector also corresponds to an outplacement assignment vector for each specific individual. For example, if the individual ranks in the top 6% of his year group, the DT recommends a future assignment as a Joint officer. Figure 6 highlights the specific percentage breakout for MAF officer vectors. This DT vectoring is designed as an intentional development of individual offices to meet the requirements of the specific career field and satisfying the long-range institutional need for senior leaders. This DT vector provides the AFPC assignment team with a recommendation linking an individual to a specific skill

pairing.<sup>28</sup> The DT's second output is a suggested list of future actions to accomplish. For example, a DT might advise an individual to broaden their career by seeking opportunities in other MAJCOMs and take steps to finish their next level of education or take the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB). The final output of vectoring is to provide the individual officer's senior raters with feedback on a specific officer's performance relative to his functional peers. Because of the sheer volume of records a DT considers, this last output is often a neglected step in the entire process.<sup>29</sup>

	<b>Pilot/Nav</b>
<b>JCS Staff</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Joint Other</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Air Staff</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>MAJCOM</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>FOA/DRU</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Non-Ops Instructor</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>***These numbers vary each cycle based on RSAP entitlements***</b>	

Figure 6: Example MAF Vector Thresholds

*Source:* HQ AMC/A1KO Spread the Word

The fourth directed responsibility of the DT is to ensure the growth and health of officers within that functional career field. To ensure the career field well-being, the DT must actively manage high-potential Airmen and assess cross functional mission opportunities, language, opportunities, and diversity. During each DT, AFPC provides the board members the current career promotion statistics, PME completion rates, command experiences, force utilization rates and requirements (present and proposed),

<sup>28</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides," 22.

<sup>29</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides," (2014), 23.

diversity ratios, and career broadening figures.<sup>30</sup> This analytic data provides the DT with a sight picture for their career field so they can develop a long-term vision for their functional personnel. This information is also intended to enable the DT to make decisions and selections to equip, train, mentor and professionally develop the next generation of Air Force leaders. Ultimately, the individual DTs have a dual responsibility to cultivate a pool of diverse future senior officers and to ensure the health of their specific career field.

Outside of these four specified DT roles, the DTs also accomplish two implied tasks. DTs board and select officers for unique functional selection programs including (but not limited to) the Advanced Logistics Readiness Officers course, Phoenix Hawk, Phoenix Reach, Space and Acquisition Exchange Program, Education with Industry, and Acquisition Logistics Experience and Exchange Tour.<sup>31</sup> Each one of these selection programs are specific to each DT and are not universal across all DTs. Most often these selection boards are held in conjunction within a formally established DT board. For example, the MAF uses the IDE/SDE DT to also conduct the Phoenix Reach mobility programs as an effort to cross flow rated Captains from the airlift community to the air refueling community and vice versa.<sup>32</sup> The intent of Phoenix Reach is to develop officers who have a broad understanding of all air mobility operations.<sup>33</sup>

The DT is also a forum to develop senior officers. The DT provides an opportunity for sitting Wing Commanders, Group Commanders, and senior members across a myriad of MAJCOMs to assess their individual officers. The DT process

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<sup>30</sup> HAF/A1, "Annual A1 Guidance to Developmental Teams (DT) Memorandum," (Washington DC2011).

<sup>31</sup> AMC/A1KO, "Spread the Word Briefing," in *Officer Development* (Scott AFB2012), 8.

<sup>32</sup> AMC/A1KO, "Spread the Word Briefing," in *Officer Development* (Scott AFB2012), 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with MAF DT Member, March 2014.

enables these senior leaders to meet and discuss the next generation of officers. Unlike in promotion boards, the DTs allow open and candid discussions between panel members.<sup>34</sup> The DT process is more openly structured and allows members to discuss candidly the records being reviewed. Lieutenant General Bash, a prior MAF/DT chair and the current AMC/CV, believes DTs provide an institutional value because they develop Wing Commanders.<sup>35</sup> For example, during several recent MAF/DTs, the DT board president required Wing Commander panel members to brief particular individual records to the entire board. These briefings forced the senior leaders, in front of their peers, to brief the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinate's records. These briefs reinforced to those senior DT officers the key aspects of officer development. So while the CSAF created the DT to develop the next generation of officers, it is has also become effective in advancing the development of current senior leaders. While panel member development was not a specified DT responsibility, it has become an integral impact from the DTs.<sup>36</sup>

Overall, the purpose of the DT is to be the conduit between the force development systems, the functional and institutional personnel requirements, and the individual service members. DTs have four specific roles with regard to officer development: nominations for professional military education (IDE/SDE), squadron commander boards, officer vectoring, and the maintenance of the individual career field health and development.<sup>37</sup> There are also two implied roles that the DT accomplishes: unique functional boards and senior officer development. The DTs play very influential and instrumental roles in officer development and the health of the entire Air Force.

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Chairs Chair, and AMC/A1, January, February 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Lt Gen Brooks Bash, (AMC/CV, Prior AMC/A3, WG/CC and DT Chair), discussion with the author, January 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with MAF DT Member, January 2014.

<sup>37</sup> HAF/A1D, "Developmental Teams Evolution Issues Study," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2012).



## DT Process Amplified

Presently there are 28 specific active officer functional areas with over 87 DT meetings that examine over thousands of Air Force personnel records.<sup>38</sup> Of those 28 officer DTs, eight DTs examine both officer and civilian records. Figure 7 shows the breakdown of Air Force DTs across the entire force: officer, enlisted, and civilian.

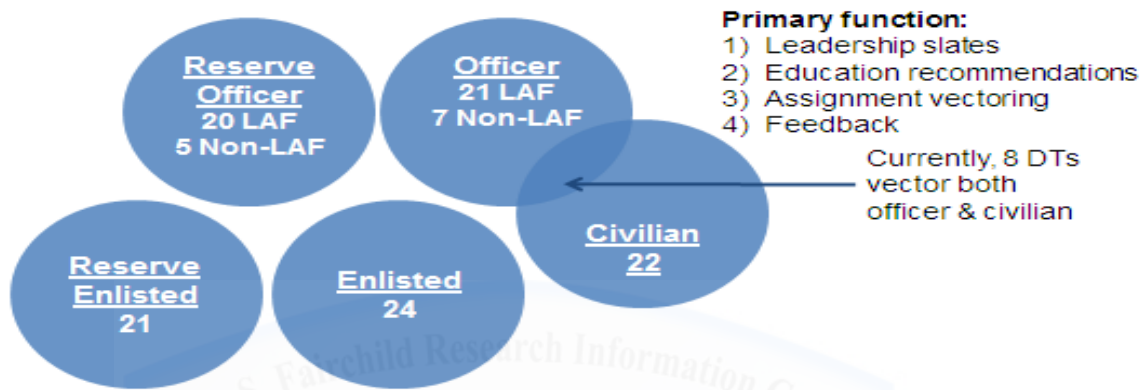


Figure 7: DTs Today and Responsibilities

Source: DT Focus Day Slides

The list below shows the more specific list of 28 active duty officer DTs as they exist across the active duty Air Force (listed in alphabetic order).

<sup>38</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides."

Acquisitions (**63X**)  
 Aerospace Medicine (**48X**)  
 Aircraft Maintenance (**21A**)  
 Airfield Operations (**13M**)  
 Biomedical Clinicians (**42X**)  
 Biomedical Specialists (**43X/44X/45X**)  
 Chaplain (**52R**)  
 Civil Engineer (**32E**)  
 Combat Air Force  
 Contracting (**64P**)  
 Cyber Operations (**17D**)  
 Dental (**47X**)  
 Finance (**65 F**)  
 Health Services (**41A**)

Intelligence (**14N**)  
 Judge Advocate (**51J**)  
 Logistics (**21R**)  
 Mobility Air Force  
 Munitions and Missile Maintenance (**21M**)  
 Nurse (**46X**)  
 Personnel/Manpower (**38P**)  
 Public Affairs/Band (**35P/35B**)  
 Space & Missile (**13S**)  
 Scientist & Engineer (**61X/62X**)  
 Security Forces (**31P**)  
 Special Investigator (**71S**)  
 Special Operations Force  
 Weather (**15W**)

This information fosters a broader understanding and appreciation for all the DTs. However, the rest of this thesis examines the particular details of the MAF DT. Normally the MAF DT meets at least three times a year to assess and consider individual MAF officer records. The IDE/SDE DT normally meets in the summer, likely in June. The squadron commander DT (aka the AMC Phoenix Eagle board) meets in September. Finally, the steady state vectoring DT occurs in the fall around October or November.

The composition of the MAF DT typically consists of eight to fourteen MAF colonel and general officers (Figure 8). HAF policy dictates the DT chair be a general officer.

<sup>88</sup> Therefore, the MAF DT is chaired by the AMC/A3 or 18th Air Force Commander. DT membership normally consists of current wing commanders, colonels from other MAJCOMs (PACAF/USAFE/AETC), a least one representative from the personnel community, and sometimes an Air Staff representative (colonel or senior civilian executive staff [SES]). Additionally, the A1 requires that the DT have no more

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<sup>88</sup> HAF/A3/5, "Implementation of Force Development Responsibilities--Rated Developmental Team Charter."

than fifty percent turnover in membership from year to year.<sup>89</sup> Ultimately, the individual DTs are responsible for ensuring compliance with the fifty percent directive.

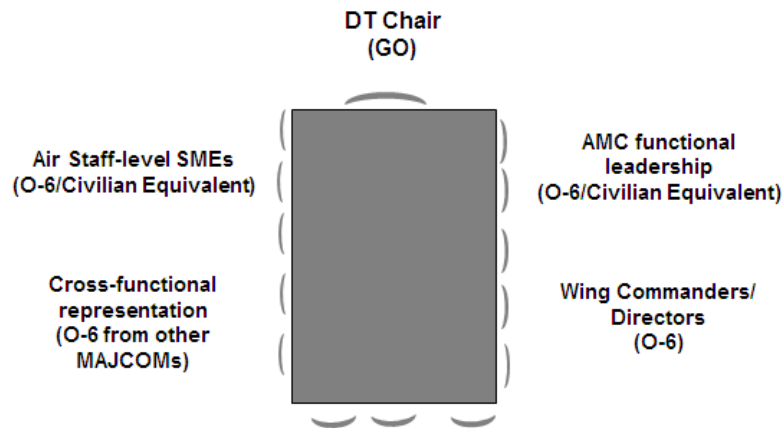


Figure 8: Normal Composition of DT Boards

Source: Author modified from AMC Developmental Discussion Slides

The MAF DT electronically scores between 80 and 250 officer records during the DT board. Each DT session typically lasts from a single day to four days. This translates into each individual record receiving approximately three minutes of analysis by every DT panel member.<sup>90</sup> The MAF DT scores the records on a six to ten point scale with half point increments (Figure 9). Once the DT scores all the records, the personnel support staff then rank orders the records from 1 to n, highest to lowest. At any point, splits greater than two points between board members require adjunction between those conflicting DT members.

While the scoring scale appears similar to the promotion process, there are three key differences between the DT process and a promotion selection board. First, during the promotion process the board members are prohibited from communicating with each other unless there is a two point spread. Conversely, the DT boards allow and even

<sup>89</sup> AFPC/DPAFF, "Force Development Branch Guide on Force Development."

<sup>90</sup> AMC A1KO, "PE Read Ahead Binder-Lt Gen Ramsey," (Scott AFB: AMC/A1KO, 2012), 17.

encourage open and candid discussions between all members.<sup>91</sup> The desire is for all members to understand fully the individuals beyond just their paper record. Therefore, in order to get the full story, members can openly talk about individuals. Often times board members will even step outside and place personal phone calls to the individuals senior rater to find out more specific details.<sup>92</sup>

<u>Score</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
10	Yes
9-9.5	Probably
8-8.5	Maybe
7-7.5	Probably not
6-6.5	Do not select

Figure 9: Scoring Scale Used During IDE/SDE and Squadron Command Selection

*Source:* An Officer's Guide to the Mobility Air Forces

The second difference is that the DT has access to a significantly larger amount of personnel information on an officer (Figure 10). For example, a promotion board can only view an individual's DQHB, OPRs, medals and PRF. The DT can view all those documents (except the PRF) and has access to a full personnel SURF, foreign language scores and aptitude, the individual's Airman Development Plan (ADP) signed by the supervisor, and the 3849, which is signed by the senior rater. Similarly, for the last two years during the MAF Phoenix Eagle board (Sq/CC board), the members have also considered flight records and physical fitness scores.<sup>93</sup>

The final difference between the promotion process and the DT board is the DTs have access to diversity information. Unlike in the promotion process where this data is hidden, in

<sup>91</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Chair and HAF/A1, December 2013 and January 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, DT Chair, and AMC/A1, January, February 2014.

<sup>93</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, and AMC/A1, December 2013 and January 2014.

the DT process the members can see all this demographic information. While the DT process may appear to have some similarities to the promotion process, it is quite different to ensure officer development and career health.<sup>94</sup>



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<sup>94</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, DT Chair, and AMC/A1, January, February 2014.



The MAF DT vectoring routinely occurs at four trigger points during an officer's career: promotion to Major, promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, the period when an officer is at IDE or SDE, and their nomination for squadron commander. The MAF DT will also re-evaluate an individual anytime a colonel or higher requests that an individual be reevaluated. Figure 11 highlights the specific trigger points when the MAF DT considers an individual officer.<sup>95</sup> While the DTs do not directly influence the promotion boards, the DTs do vector, nominate, and select officers for competitive programs and career opportunities. Therefore, these actions of the DTs invariably have a subsequent impact on an officer's future promotion potential.

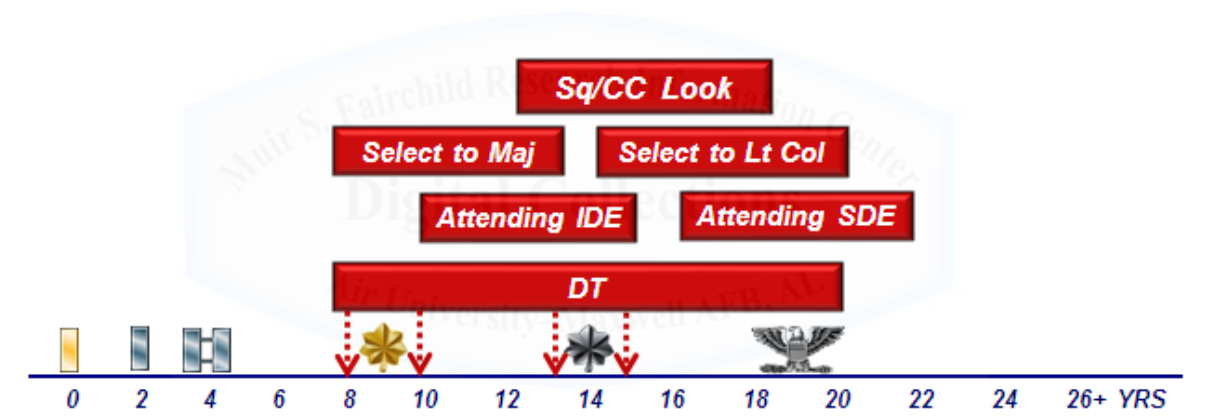


Figure 11: DT Vector Trigger Timelines

Source: HQ/AMCA1KO Spread the Word Brief

This chapter discussed the origin of the DT and examined its current role in officer development. General Jumper saw a definite deficiency in Air Force force development and established the DT process. The DTs today play an integral role in the health of the specific functional area and the Air Force as a whole, and the MAF DT has an important role in functional officer development for the Air Mobility force (Figure 12). Chapter three will examine how closely the MAF DT follows the CSAF's vision

<sup>95</sup> AMC/A1KO, "Spread the Word Briefing."

using principal-agent theory. The chapter will assess the MAF DT's level of compliance or resistance with regard to the CSAF's desires, and concludes with an assessment and explanation of this particular response.

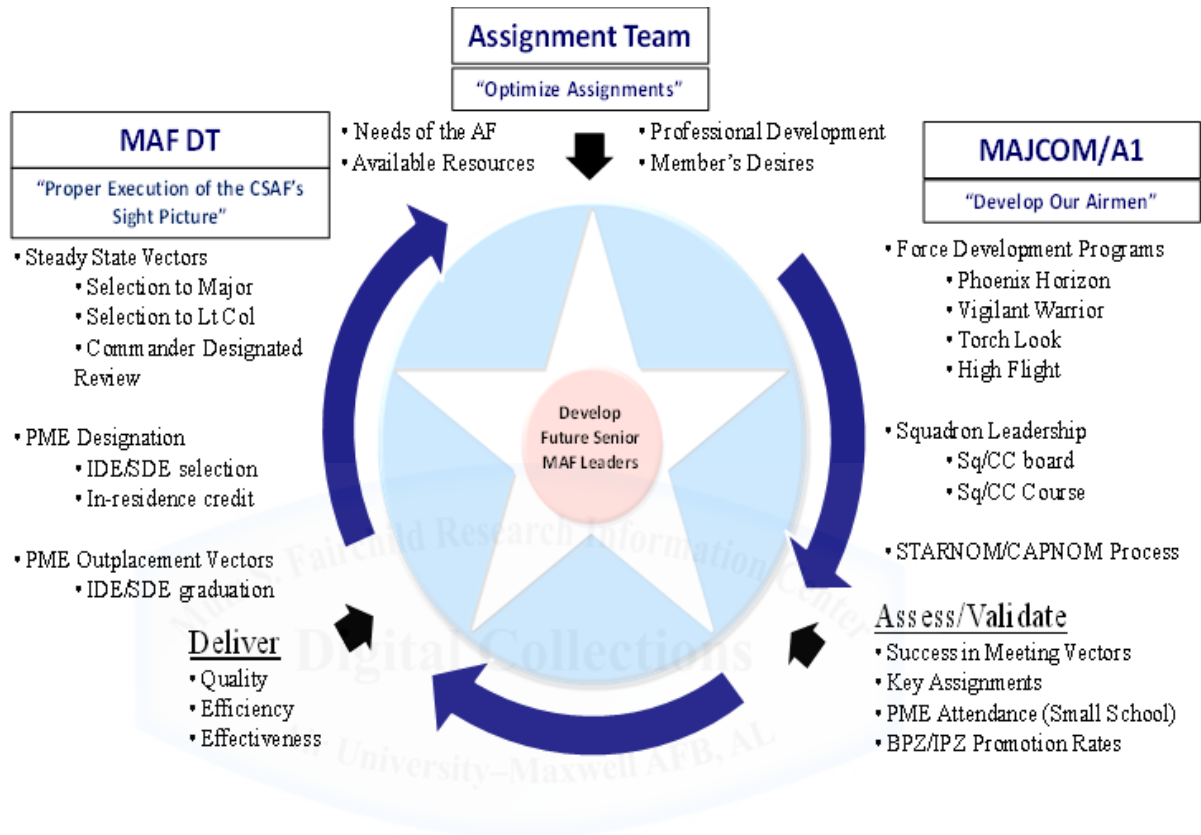


Figure 12: MAF DT Influence

Source: Officers Guide to MAF DT



## CHAPTER 3

### COOPERATING OR RESISTING: THE MAF DT AT WORK

This chapter asks if there is *consistency between the CSAF's vision and the functional Mobility Air Force Developmental Team selection process, particularly in regard to IDE and SDE selection, and if not what explains these differences?* Hypothetically, the MAF DT and the CSAF should seek the same outcome: the development of the next generation of Air Force leaders. To determine if the MAF DT is compliant or resistant, this research examines the relationship of three independent variables: preferences, incentives, and monitoring. First, this research studies the difference between the CSAF and DT's preferences for officer development. Second, this research studies the incentive structure, both positive and negative, that the CSAF uses to encourage the MAF DT's compliance. Lastly, this thesis assesses the CSAF's use of monitoring to maintain oversight of the DT process.

#### **DT and CSAF Preference Gaps**

In the past decade, the Air Force has experienced four different CSAFs and hundreds of MAF DT panel members. However, the fundamental priority for the CSAFs and those DT members has not radically changed. At the central core, both want to develop the best future officers to lead the Air Force. This predominant goal is not unique to the four past Chiefs or the MAF DT. Rather, as highlighted in chapter two, the desire to develop future leaders predates the creation of the DTs. This desire to advance future leaders is as old as the Air Force. General Hap Arnold, the World War II Chief of the Army Air Forces, highlighted his desire to grow the next generation in his passionate interactions with a young Major Bernard Schriever. Arnold's passion for officer development resonated through his mentorship of this young Air Force leader and future

four-star general.<sup>1</sup> However, not everyone in the Air Force agreed with Arnold's favor upon Schriever. For example, General Curtis LeMay marginalized Schriever, sought to ostracize him with an assignment to Korea, and openly stated, "you realize if I had my way, you wouldn't be wearing those" pointing to Schriever's shoulder rank.<sup>2</sup> Even today, the CSAF seeks to promote individuals such as Major Thomas that the wider Air Force may not.

The principal-agent theory is a tool to assess the CSAF and MAF DT relationship and tension. The CSAF and the MAF DT sometimes have different preferences in the IDE/SDE designation for those officers and in the method used to develop them. The members of the MAF DT do not seek to nominate the worst officers; rather, interviews of DT members confirm that participants overwhelmingly believe their purpose is to select and develop the best officers to lead the Air Force. Therefore, in the most basic premise, the CSAF and MAF DT prefer the same goal.

The devil is in the details. The preference gap between the two resides in *how* to complete this objective. The tension begins when members within the MAF DT have preferences or personal biases toward officers with certain attributes and qualifications that are counter to the CSAF's intent. The second preference divergence between the CSAF and the MAF DT is in the method of development. For example, the CSAF may envision a particular academic progression or particular career path for these officers. Instead, the MAF DT propels them on a different path.

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). 17, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Sheehan, *A Fiery Peace in a Cold War: Bernard Schriever and the Ultimate Weapon*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). 471.

The first example of these CSAF's IDE/SDE preferences was illustrated in General Roger Brady's 2005 memorandum to the DTs. At the CSAF's direction, General Brady, the HAF/A1 at the time, directed all senior leaders and the DTs to stop requiring developmental education (DE) *selects* from being required to complete school in-correspondence. This memorandum became known as the "practice bleeding memo," because it ridiculed "the mindset that practice bleeding makes an officer better."<sup>3</sup>

The Air Force designates an individual as a *select* for IDE and SDE based on their promotion board ranking during their Major or Lieutenant Colonel board. Historically, the board designated anyone in the top 20% of the Majors board to be an IDE select (MAF DT promotions). Similarly, the Lieutenant Colonel board designated the top 5% of the in-the-zone individuals as SDE selects. This *select* designation was a promise from the Air Force that guaranteed that individual a slot at their next developmental education level. The remaining individuals selected by the board for Major and Lieutenant Colonel were labeled as *candidates*. As *candidates*, they were not guaranteed a DE slot like the selects. These *candidates* had to compete annually for a small number of slots to attend the next DE.<sup>4</sup> Because the Air Force had "promised" selects in-residence DE slots, the CSAF believed it was wasteful to continue mandating that they complete distant learning /correspondence developmental education before attending a given school in-residence.

While the CSAF's preference and desire on developmental education appeared clear, this memorandum conflicted with the past beliefs, biases, and preferences of many officers sitting on the MAF DT. Many DT members grew up in an Air Force which expected correspondence as a normal occurrence for career progression. As such, panel

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<sup>3</sup> AF/DP, "Developmental Education Memorandum," (Washington DC: HAF/A1, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> AMC/A3, "An Officer's Guide to the Mobility Air Forces Developmental Team," (Scott AFB: AMC, 2010).

members of the MAF DT continued to rely on their own past personal experiences and preferences instead of embracing the new CSAF directed policy.<sup>5</sup>

A second example of the divergent preferences was with regard to master's degrees. In 2005, General Jumper, as the CSAF directed the Air Force to hide Master's degrees for the promotion board to Major.<sup>6</sup> However, the DTs panel members still used Master's degrees as one of the selection determinants when designating individuals for IDE selection, despite the guidance from the CSAF. General Jumper believed master's degrees and correspondence education should not be used as a discriminator when selecting future leaders, particularly at the IDE level.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the MAF DT continued to use these as a qualifier.

In 2006, after General Michael Mosley took over as the new CSAF, he reversed the previous policy that masked Master's degrees for Majors and provided a two-year grace period for those individuals to accomplish it.<sup>8</sup> However, the CSAF's policy regarding selects and the completion of correspondence never changed. Given the preference gaps between the CSAF and the DT, this new change had little impact on how the DT continued to assess individuals for DE. The MAF DT still considered both master's degrees and correspondence completion in their decision.<sup>9</sup>

In 2008, the HAF/A1 tried to further codify the CSAF's guidance by incorporating it into the Air Force Instruction, 36-2640, which governed total force

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<sup>5</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, DT Chairs, and AMC/A1, December 2013 and January, February 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Maj Tobias Switzer, "Air Force Policy for Advanced Education: Production of Human Capital or Cheap Signals?," *Air & Space Power Journal* 25, no. 4 (2011): 29.

<sup>7</sup> General (Ret.) Roger Brady (USAFE/CC and prior HAF/A1), in discussion with the author, February 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Switzer, "Air Force Policy for Advanced Education: Production of Human Capital or Cheap Signals?," 30.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, December 2013 and January, February 2014.

development processes.<sup>10</sup> This instruction specifically stated, “officers who are identified as ‘selects’ for resident DE programs must not be expected to have completed a corresponding non-resident course in order to be recommended for resident DE attendance.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, during each MAF DT board, a representative from the Air Force Personnel Center provided the members with the CSAF’s current “force development” guidance memorandum and emphasis items. Each of these guidance memorandums clearly specified that “DTs will not penalize a ‘select’ who has not completed PME by DL.”<sup>12</sup>

While the CSAF and his HAF staff often assume the preferences are unmistakably articulated, the reality is his preferences are not always clear or well-articulated. For example in a November 2011 report, the HAF3/5 staff admitted that one of the fundamental problems facing the DTs was a “lack of formal Air Staff guidance to DT Panels.” Likewise, they acknowledged there was a wide variance between the development of “high value” rated officers amongst the different DTs.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this report, the A3/5 recommended establishing an annual two-day conference to review and emphasize the CSAF’s priorities, particularly for the rated staff allocation plan.<sup>14</sup>

Interviews of several senior MAF officers highlighted the differing preference gap. In several instances, MAF DT members were unaware that the CSAF had outlined specific correspondence completion guidance to the DT through annual guidance memorandums, notifications to the board, and through Air Force instructions.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> USAF/A1D, "Air Force Instruction 36-2640," ed. HQ/USAF/A1D (Washington DC2011).

<sup>11</sup> USAF/A1D, "Air Force Instruction 36-2640," ed. HQ/USAF/A1D (Washington DC2011), 12.

<sup>12</sup> HAF/A1D, "AF/A1 Force Development Guidance".

<sup>13</sup> HAF/A3/5, "Air Force Guidance to Developmental Teams," (Washington DC2011), 7.

<sup>14</sup> HAF/A3/5, "Air Force Guidance to Developmental Teams," (Washington DC2011), 9.

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members and AMC/A1, December 2013 and January 2014.

However, other DT members acknowledged they were aware of the CSAF's preferences, and still made the conscious decision to not comply because they personally felt those discriminators were important to assess future potential. These MAF DT board members highlighted a conflict with the CSAF's guidance. Likewise, one member stated he "had seen these policies flip flop back and forth before."<sup>16</sup> He believed these developmental changes were simply pet projects and whims of the various CSAFs.

To further amplify these divergent preferences, during a 2012 MAF DT board several MAF members stated, "completing correspondence shows how *hungry* an individual is to attend IDE," regardless if they are a select or candidate. Numerous MAF DT members agreed they would not only use *if* a select completed correspondence, but they also would use *when* it was completed. The MAF DT used *when* an individual finished IDE or SDE in-correspondence as a determinant to quantify the nominee's "hunger" for future advancement.<sup>17</sup> These verbalized board preferences were also reflected in published material AMC distributed to prospective officers. This MAF officer guidance stated everyone should complete correspondence, regardless of select or candidate, no later than reaching the next rank plus one year. In fact, the guide stated, "complete PME by correspondence as soon as you are eligible, regardless of your status (select or candidate). By completing it early you will make yourself more competitive for key opportunities (assignments and development education)."<sup>18</sup>

Yet, this preference was not universally shared among all the board members. A few of the DT members dissented from this resistant behavior. One wing commander protested and queried the others, "when should these selects be expected to complete

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<sup>16</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Chairs, January 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, January, February, and April 2014.

<sup>18</sup> AMC/A3, "An Officer's Guide to the Mobility Air Forces Developmental Team," 9.

correspondence if they are going straight from in-residence IDE to squadron commander?” However, another DT wing commander quipped back, “I did it in the two months of my summer before command.”<sup>19</sup>

In recent years, several dominant DT preferences directly conflicted with the CSAF’s guidance and eventually contributed to the board’s resistance. Not only was the DT panel using correspondence and Master’s degrees as discriminators of *who* to select, they were also using it to determine *when* individuals should command or attend subsequent developmental education. While some individuals may downplay these past interactions and DT examples as only a minor divergence between the CSAF and the DT, it highlights two problems. First, it underscores a preference gap of *who* the DT preferred to designate as the next senior Air Force leaders. The MAF DT opted to select individuals who had completed a Master’s degree and correspondence over those individuals who had not, against the CSAF’s stated desire. Second, the DT’s actions highlighted a pattern of resistance because the board members knew the CSAF’s preference, and deliberately chose not to follow his guidance. While there was a preference gap between the CSAF-MAF DT, the CSAF should still be able to employ incentives to overcome this difference and motivate the agents towards compliance.

### **DT Incentives**

This next section discusses the incentives, or rather the lack of them for the MAF DT.

The principle within a principal-agent relationship can use both positive and negative incentives to encourage compliance. Within those two categories, there are also outcome-based incentives and behavior-based incentives. The CSAF, as the principal, can utilize positive incentives to motivate, reward, and reinforce the agents. On the other

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<sup>19</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, April 2014.

hand, the CSAF can also use negative incentives to discipline, punish, and reprimand those who do not conform to his desires. The most prominent use of balanced incentives is through the use of “carrots and sticks.” The CSAF can use positive carrots or negative sticks to encourage the MAF DT to comply with his desires for task accomplishment.

Recent CSAFs have used few incentives, positive or negative, to influence directly the MAF DT’s behavior. Numerous MAF interviews validate that the lack of direct incentives, positive or negative, has encouraged the MAF DT to seek to satisfy its internal motivation due to a lack of external incentives. This is because the CSAF is so distant and disengaged from the immediate process. Rather, the internal incentives that drive the MAF DT are stronger and more relevant: the pursuit to benefit their immediate subordinates, peer consensus/congeniality, and supervisor functional appeasement.

In a typical MAF DT, approximately 50 to 60 percent of the participating MAF DT members are current wing commanders.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, these commanders have a strong incentive to take care of their individual nominees they pushed to the board. These wing commanders must return to their bases and face their IDE and SDE nominees with their results, and it is highly unlikely these individual MAF DT panel members will ever personally interact with the CSAF over the issue. Similarly, many of these wing commanders determine their DE nominees based on correspondence and master’s completion before they reach the DT board. General Mark Welsh, the current CSAF, commented on these types of occurrences in his statement, “80 percent of promotions are decided before they even reach the board” because the individual senior raters and wing

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<sup>20</sup> A1KO, “PE Read Ahead Binder-Lt Gen Ramsey.”



commanders have significant influence before the members even reach the board.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, these wing commanders also have a strong vested interest when those individual's records reach the DT board. Consequently, these DT panel members are more likely to support their own vision than they are to be directly by the CSAF's guidance when they serve on the DT board. Ultimately, the MAF DT members have more incentives to "satisfy" their own nominees for squadron command and for developmental education during the DT selection process.

Second, the panel members are more strongly incentivized to seek commonality and concurrence with their peers on the DT board. Edgar Schein, in *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, highlights this desire to seek cognitive stability within a group dynamic.<sup>22</sup> The panel members seek group harmony, cohesion, and agreement based on the panel's shared assumptions with regards to the dominant opinion for correspondence or master's degrees.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, a DT member is more incentivized to assuage the immediate peer social circle and culture instead of siding with a conflicting principal's desires.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, the individual members are personally motivated because the leaders of the MAF DT are senior general officers within AMC. These senior officers have the power and influence to impact that DT member's careers more immediately than the CSAF. For example, the MAF squadron commander DT board is chaired by the 18th/AF commander. Coincidentally, he is also the direct rater for 35 percent to 55 percent of the

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<sup>21</sup>General Mark Welsh (CSAF) Public Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," (2014).

<sup>22</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational culture and leadership*, 4th ed., The Jossey-Bass business & management series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010). 32.

<sup>23</sup> Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational culture and leadership*, 4th ed., The Jossey-Bass business & management series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010) 18-19.

<sup>24</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, December 2013 and April 2014.

panel members.<sup>25</sup> One individual interviewee commented, while there was active discussion amongst the colonels of the board, few choose to confront the opinion of the 3-star 18thAF/CC. While this research did not interview all the 18thAF/CC, there was anecdotal evidence that indicated that his personal views did not always align with the CSAF's views.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the panel members are more likely to be influenced by the desires and preferences of the board chair than they are incentivized by the CSAF. This is because the CSAF provides no promotion impact, organizational involvement, or direct influence over the MAF DT members. Conversely, numerous interviews validated the persuasive, relevant, and lasting influence that the board chair has in steering the individual MAF DTs.<sup>27</sup> The board chair is far more influential incentivizing the rest of the panel members because he is either a panel member's direct supervisor or he is a general officer within the same tribe who can impact next jobs, assignments, or promotions. The CSAF is separated by numerous bureaucratic layers, so he applies minimal incentives to the MAF DT.

While this research did not find any direct application of CSAF-MAF DT incentives, this does not mean it has not occurred. For example, one interviewee highlighted that the CSAF directly contacted the two-star CAF DT chair and expressed his displeasure with changes the individual had implemented with the CAF Squadron Commander and Director of Operations DT board. The CSAF asked the general to modify an aspect of the board, but the DT chair urged it continue. The interviewee noted that it was no surprise this general officer was not further promoted and subsequently

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<sup>25</sup> A1KO, "PE Read Ahead Binder-Lt Gen Ramsey."

<sup>26</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, DT Chairs, and AMC/A1, December 2013 and January, February, April 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, December 2013 and January, February 2014.

retired after this conversation. While there are likely numerous reasons besides this specific interaction why the CSAF may have not promoted him, this direct communication demonstrated that the CSAF can choose to influence DT changes through his personal involvement and interaction. Outside of this sole CSAF example, however, this research found no other past direct interactions with the individual DT panel members.<sup>28</sup>

Another example that illustrates the deficiency of external incentives is that the number of DE slots each DT receives does not vary based on the DT's behavior. While candidate and select slots vary from year to year, they are not influenced by the DT's compliance or resistance. Rather, HAF/A1 designates slots to the 28 DT's based on a total DE aggregate. They then distribute these equally based off the DT's size relative to the other DTs.<sup>29</sup> Since the MAF is about fifteen percent of the total composition, the MAF DT receives a corresponding number of slots for candidates and selects. However, this current method provides no incentives, positive or negative, to encourage a change in a DT's behavior. If the CSAF was serious about motivating the MAF DT, he should alter the allocation of slots to each DT based on their level of compliance. Therefore, if the MAF DT executed in strict compliance with his desires, then they would receive more DE slots for their nominees in comparison to the DTs from other communities.

However, in reality, the total number of MAF DE slots is detached from any corresponding compliance or resistance. Theoretically, the MAF DT could completely resist the principal and there would be no subsequent impact to its DE allocation for the

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<sup>28</sup>Interviews with MAF DT Members and CAF DT Members, November and December 2013 and January, February 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Interviews with HAF Members, December 2013 and February 2014.

follow-on year. The CSAF does not apply any incentives, positive or negative, to modify or encourage compliant behavior. Instead, the MAF has seen steadily declining DE positions over the past six years, as have all the DTs (Figure 11 and 12). But these reductions have had little to nothing to do with DT compliance or non-compliance to the CSAF's guidance.

IDE	Selects	Candidates	Total	% Selects	% Candidates
2008	44	52	96	46%	54%
2009	60	42	102	59%	41%
2010	48	48	96	50%	50%
2011	56	20	76	74%	26%
2012	51	19	70	73%	27%
2013	65	1	66	98%	2%

Figure 13: 2008-2013 MAF IDE Selection Rates  
Source: Author Compiled Chart from MAF DT Out briefs

SDE	Selects	Candidates	Total	% Selects	% Candidates
2008	34	3	37	92%	8%
2009	34	4	38	89%	11%
2010	32	4	36	89%	11%
2011	26	4	30	87%	13%
2012	24	6	30	80%	20%
2013	17	8	25	68%	32%

Figure 14: 2008-2013 MAF SDE Selection Rates  
Source: Author Compiled Chart from MAF DT Out briefs

These reductions were the result of recent financial constraints that have led to cuts in Air Force DE positions, overhead, and structure. While officer DE slots are decreasing, DE costs also appear to be rising. Similarly, within the DoD, the Air Force officer educational costs are already higher than most of the other services in every category except one, War College. In FY 2012, Air Command and Staff College cost

nearly \$120K dollars per student (Figure 15). This was nearly 180 percent higher than its Marine counterpart. These higher costs and decreased slots have encouraged the MAF DT to be more deliberate in their officer selections. One problem is this deliberate selection process often includes delineators with which the CSAF.

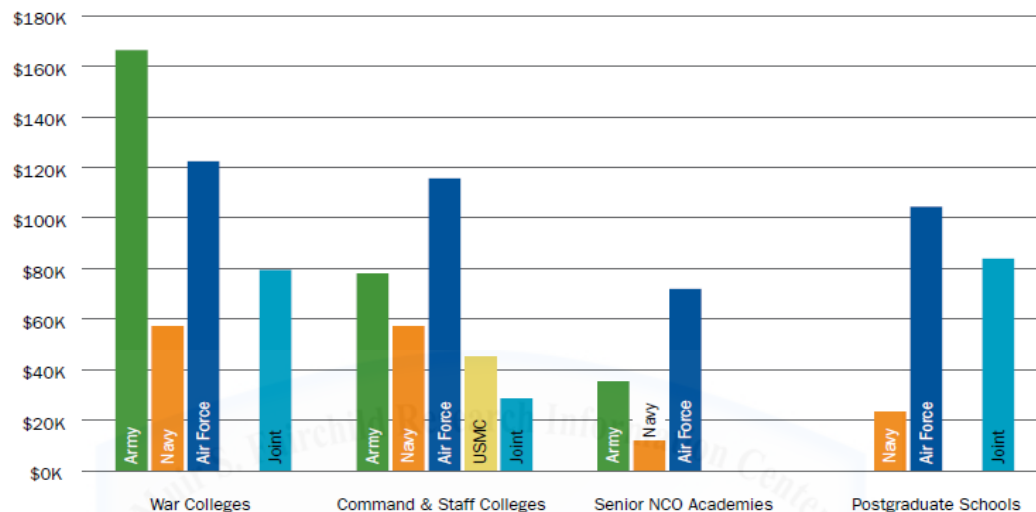


Figure 15: FY 2012 Cost per Student MAF Ribbon Chart  
Source: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

Overall, these developmental slot decreases across all the DTs pose two problems for the CSAF. First, it highlights the CSAF has not linked agent incentives to his desired task completion. For example, he has not punished the perceived MAF's resistance with decreases in IDE/SDE slots. Rather, every DT has lost an equal number of slots in the past several years regardless of their compliance or resistance. Therefore, the MAF DT is not incentivized to modify its behavior from year to year. Second, the collective decrease across the entire spectrum of DTs causes the MAF DT to amplify their current resistant behavior. For instance, AMC has acknowledged these DE cuts and pointedly determined in order to ensure future AMC officers remain competitive, individuals must complete all

the necessary promotion “box checking” steps. In an era of constricting resources, the MAF DT has sought more officer delinators instead of less. Hence, in order to be more marketable for future advancement, the larger MAF community, supervisors, squadron commanders and senior raters, (not just the MAF DT) expect these potential nominees to complete correspondence and master’s degrees before even being nominated to the MAF DT board. Preferably, the CSAF should encourage DT compliance through incentives. However, the DE decreases and lack of clear external incentives only serves to exacerbate the MAF DT resistance as they seek additional discriminators to differentiate amongst their top performers, and these discriminators tend to be attainment of correspondence and master’s degrees, which are in direct contradiction to the CSAF’s guidance.

Figure 16 underscores the prevalence of this overt MAF DT IDE/SDE expectation with regard to advanced academic degrees (AAD) and PME completion. This MAF behavior is at odds with the principal’s preference that job performance be the number one determinant. The extremely low numbers of individuals who have not completed their AAD and correspondence underscore the influence the MAF DT and the entire MAF enterprise have on their officers. Historically, the MAF DT only nominated four to five individuals each year out of nearly 100 that have not completed their correspondence before attending in-residence DE. Unfortunately in 2011, this translated to a 91 percent select correspondence completion rate. Yet, the CSAF’s guidance clearly states it is not required and not necessarily desired. In 2012, the DT nominated 100 percent of its 65 selects who had IDE by correspondence. Similarly in 2010 to 2012, the MAF DT required all 100 percent of its candidates to be correspondence complete before the board

nominated them to DEDB.<sup>30</sup> These high numbers are indicative of the MAF DT's resistant behavior. If the MAF DT was following the CSAF's guidance then these correspondence PME completion numbers should be more range from 20 to 30 percent instead of 94 to 100 percent (Figure 16).

IDE	AAD %	# AAD Complete	PME %	# Corr Complete
2010	93%	91 of 96	95%	91 of 96
2011	92%	73 of 76	95%	72 of 76
2012	100%	70 of 70	94%	66 of 70

SDE	AAD	# AAD Complete	PME	# Corr Complete
2010	100%	36 of 36	94%	34 of 36
2011	97%	29 of 30	87%	26 of 30
2012	*	*	*	*

\* No Data Available

Figure 16: 2010-2012 MAF IDE/SDE AAD/PME DE Nominee Completion Rates

Source: Author Compiled Figure from MAF DT Out briefs

Ultimately, the MAF DT members are more likely to be internally incentivized by interactions with individuals in their wing, through peer and group consensus, or by their immediate general officer supervisor who may also participate in the board. Incentives are an essential mechanism that the principal can use to ensure an agent's compliance, yet, the CSAF provides no direct incentives to the MAF DT. The lack of consistent, direct, and measurable CSAF-MAF DT interactions underscore an absence of external, constant, and meaningful incentives, positive or negative, from the CSAF. Similarly, the decreases in DE slots has unified the MAF members and made them seek out more discriminators to select their officer for future development. Unfortunately, the CSAF has allowed and even encouraged resistance by decreasing DE slots overall. Likewise,

<sup>30</sup> AMC/A1, "MAF DT Out briefs Slides," (Scott AFB, IL2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013).

his lack of clear established rewards or punishment for behavior that is not consistent with his preferences has perpetuated an environment of resistance. Ultimately, the MAF DT prefers to follow its own internal incentive structure because it receives little external incentives from the CSAF.

### **Monitoring Regime**

Although, the CSAF does not provide any direct positive or negative incentives for the MAF DT, the CSAF and his staff can and do monitor the DT's behavior. The monitoring mechanisms that the principal uses in the MAF DT relationship reside in two areas: personnel/process execution and DT products.

The first area that the CSAF and his delegates monitor is personnel. The CSAF relies enormously on individual functional managers and AFPC to observe and oversee the DTs. For the MAF DT, the functional authority is the HAF/A3/5 and the functional manager is the HAF/A3O.<sup>31</sup> One challenge with this organizational oversight process is that the two-star HAF/A3O or AFPC/CC have a wide range of responsibilities. Like the HAF/A1, DT oversight is an extremely small piece of his duties. The oversight of all rated DTs, including the MAF DT, is just one of dozens of A3O responsibilities. Therefore, the Air Staff relies heavily on passive DT self-monitoring. Often the staff assumes that because the MAF DT is chaired by a fellow two or three-star general, that the DT will naturally comply with the CSAF's guidance. However, this is not always a safe assumption.

In this passive monitoring arrangement, the MAF DT chair simply provides an email summary or an electronic power point brief to the Air Staff functional manager.

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<sup>31</sup> HAF/A3/5, "Developmental Discussion Brief," (Washington DC: HAF/A3/5, 2010).



Usually, this email summary satisfies the principal's monitoring requirement. However on rare occasions, the HAF/A3/5 office has sent a colonel or SES to participate in the MAF DT and score individual records. However, this occurrence has been infrequent and inconsistent in the past years.<sup>32</sup> In fact, some of the other DTs, like the CAF DT, have been overtly resistant to direct HAF monitoring their actions. When the HAF attempted to be involved in their process the DT rebuffed the HAF, stating they do not want A1 attendance. However, the MAF DT has been largely neutral and neither encourages nor deters the HAF/A1 to participate in their process.

The CSAF's staff does make some attempts to independently observe the DT's actions. The majority of all the other functional DTs conduct their boards at the Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph AFB, Texas. Most other DTs conduct all their IDE/SDE, steady state vectors, and squadron commander boards at Randolph. However, this is not true for the MAF DT. The MAF DT hosts only one DT at Randolph, the IDE/SDE board. Historically, AMC leaders have decided to execute the MAF squadron commander board in conjunction with their semi-annual wing commander summer conference. Since most of the other DT boards are hosted at Randolph, AFPC personnel members assist, observe, and comment to the Air Staff on the individual DT. However, the MAF DT is far more independent since most of its boards are conducted off-site at Scott AFB, Illinois. Similarly, the MAF DT has tried and continues to try to transition this board to Scott AFB. However, due technical limitations and computer support, the MAF DT has continued to convene at Randolph AFB.<sup>33</sup> One potential reason why the MAF seeks to consolidate its boards at Scott AFB is to avoid principal monitoring. This

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<sup>32</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members, AMC/A1 and HAF/A1, December 2013 and January, March 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Members and AMC/A1, December 2013 and January 2014.

is not the sole reason for the attempt to consolidate, but it may indicate a subconscious desire for MAF DT autonomy and potential resistance.

The second area is product monitoring. One partial example of successful monitoring was with the MAF DT products. AFPC and A1 developmental team guidance dictated that all DT should not utilize “non-standardized AF documents...as part of a member’s record of performance.”<sup>34</sup> However, the MAF DT developed and implemented its own specific consolidated product (Figure 17) called the Force Development Ribbon Chart (FRDC) to make it easier for the DTs and senior raters to assess an individual’s record. Lieutenant General Allardice, the 18th AF commander and later AMC/CV, directed the MAF ribbon charts for all for individuals competing in the 2011 and 2012 MAF DTs. In 2013, AFPC asked the MAF DT to stop using these products in their DE boards because they were not standard Air Force products.<sup>35</sup> Since then, the MAF DT does not use this product for the IDE/SDE board which meets at Randolph AFB, but they continue to use this product for all other DT boards that meet at Scott AFB.<sup>36</sup> In 2014 the MAF released an updated ribbon chart (Figure 18). This new product further highlights the “box checking” mentality that encourages selects to complete their AAD and correspondence. For instance, AMC’s sample ribbon chart demonstrates an IDE select but still delineates red boxes for unfinished correspondence. Similarly, the MAF DT went one step further and now requires fitness scores and flying history reports for all rated nominees for the DT. Interestingly, under current DT guidelines these types of discriminators are restricted. Yet, the MAF has not only continued, but expanded their utilization across the rest of its DTs.

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<sup>34</sup> HAF/A1D, "AF/A1 Force Development Guidance ".

<sup>35</sup> Interviews with MAF DT Chair, January 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews with AMC/A1, December 2013 and January 2014.

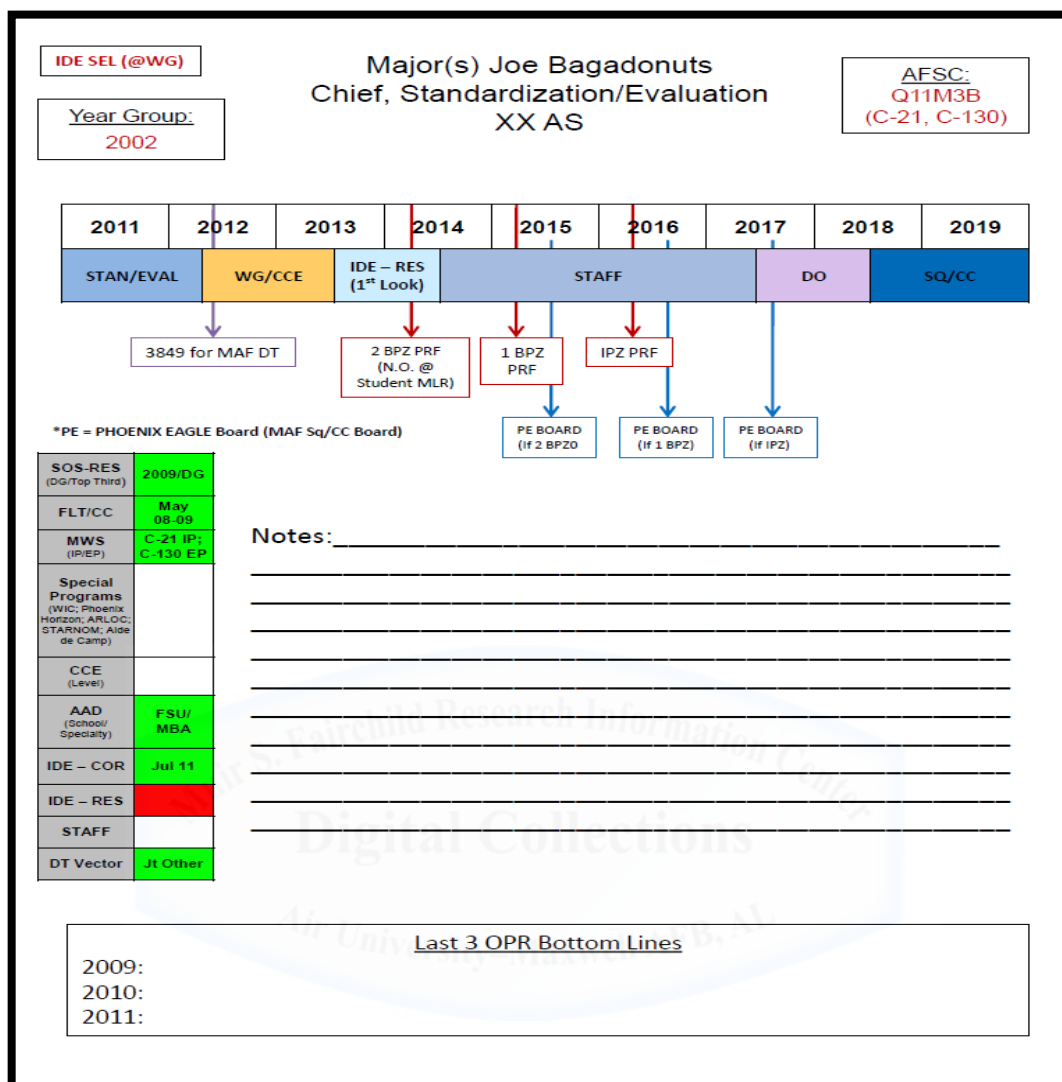


Figure 17: 2012 MAF Ribbon Chart

Source: Officer Development Ribbons-AMC/A1KO

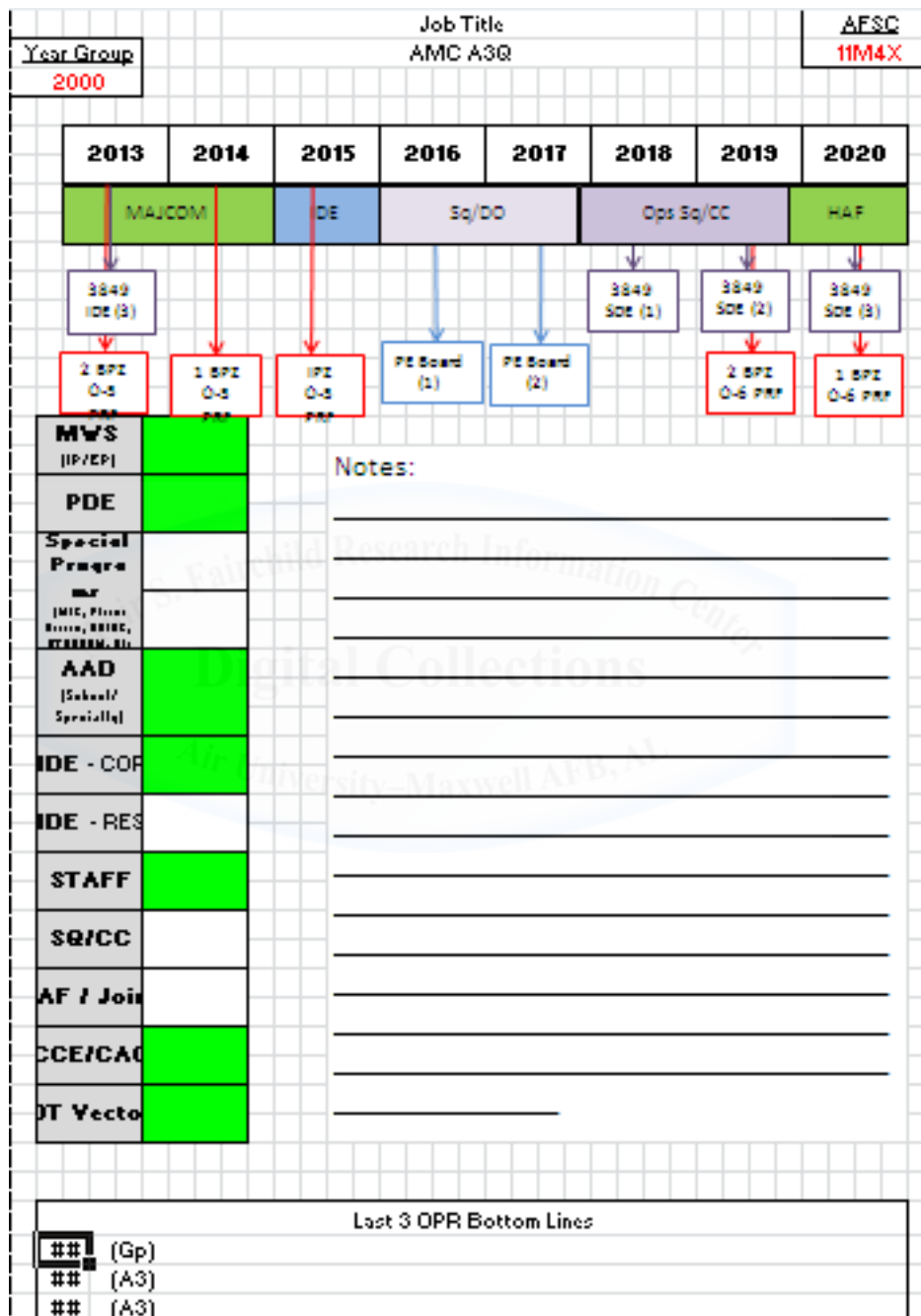


Figure 18: 2014 Expanded MAF Ribbon Chart

Source: Officer Development Ribbons-AMC/A1KO Slides

Ultimately, the CSAF has provided loose and mostly passive monitoring mechanisms over the MAF DT. However, monitoring is an important tool to ensure agent compliance. If it is not actively and effectively employed, then agents tend to default to their own rewards and motivations versus those of the principal. In order to have a successful principal-agent relationship, monitoring is an essential tool. When it is absent, theory suggests an increased level of resistance.

This section examined the interactions of three independent variables within the principal-agent relationship: preference gaps, incentives, and monitoring. A high preference gap between the CSAF and MAF DT tends to yield resistance. The preference gap is the most important part of the principal-agent relationship because without it resistance would never occur. However, if there is a preference gap combined with a lack of incentives and monitoring, then agent resistance often occurs. Ultimately, the CSAF is responsible to first clearly articulate to the functionals his preferences and then force the MAF DT to accomplish his desires through incentives and monitoring.

#### **MAF DT- TODAY AND BEYOND**

The current CSAF, General Welsh, has taken a strong interest in examining the rise of the functionals and the DTs. Recently, he has scrutinized their role, responsibility, and impact on officer advancement, development, and promotion opportunities. In 2013 he commissioned a RAND study to research the effectiveness of the developmental teams. While this report is not yet complete, the draft highlights the DTs serve a valuable purpose, but they have overstepped their responsibility when compared to the role of commanders and have sought to satisfy functional desires over corporate development

goals.<sup>37</sup> General Welsh amplified this opinion when he derogatorily referenced during a speech the “excessive rise of the functionals.”<sup>38</sup> He also stated, “the functionals lead the Air Force because commanders fail to lead.”<sup>39</sup> These negative opinions in part stem from perceived and actual DT resistance. If the DTs were accomplishing their tasks in compliance with the CSAF’s guidance then the CSAF would not wish to revamp the developmental education process. However in January 2014, the CSAF felt it essential to address some of these functional and DT issues, and he devoted a day to host a “DT Focus Day.”<sup>40</sup> No other past CSAF has sat down with most of the DT chairs in one sitting. General Welsh’s purpose was to “review/obtain a vector check on the role of the DTs.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, it highlighted that “DTs play a valuable role in the development of the Total Force; focused guidance and more standardization will help balance functional and corporate requirements.”<sup>42</sup>

In addition to this DT focus day, General Welsh has taken active steps to address developmental education through more clear guidance to the DTs and the broader Air Force. For example the CSAF pointedly stated, ““I am going to prohibit selects from doing correspondence.”<sup>43</sup> In response to this desire, his staff released a Personnel Services Delivery Memorandum (PSDM) 14-19 in March of 2014 that stated, “selects are now prohibited from enrolling in ACSC/AWC by DL.”<sup>44</sup> The purpose of this change was to shift the DTs and promotion process away from “box-checking” and back to job

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<sup>37</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides."

<sup>38</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

<sup>39</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Interviews with HAF, March 2014.

<sup>41</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides," January 2014.

<sup>42</sup> HAF/A1, "DT Focus Day Slides," January 2014.

<sup>43</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

<sup>44</sup> HQ AFPC/DPA, "CY14 Intermediate/Senior Developmental Education Designation Board Nomination Procedural Message and Civilian Developmental Education and Civilian Strategic Leader Nomination Call," ed. AFPC (Randolph AFB, TX2014), 9.

performance as the number one discriminator. He went on to say, “I don’t care if you have five masters degrees, I only care how well you perform your job.”<sup>45</sup> As specific as this guidance is, however, it only addresses one variable within the resistance and compliance equation. While this PSDM is unambiguous in its message, the publishing of this PSDM is not widely distributed across the force. Likewise, the prohibited statement is buried on page nine of a 33 page PSDM that few commanders realize exists. If the CSAF wanted to delineate explicitly his preferences, he must take well-publicize steps to convey this message. Instead of burying the guidance on page nine, he might personally write a guidance memorandum that clarifies his preference for the functional DTs.

While General Welsh has taken steps to codify his preferences, he must also augment these desires with deliberate incentives and active monitoring mechanisms. Otherwise, the MAF DT, other DTs and even individuals, will continue to seek their own discriminators for developmental education selection. A stated preference is a first step, but it is only a first step that accomplishes little without the other components. General Jumper also articulated his preferences in 2005, but the DT still resisted. The CSAF in the introduction story articulated his preference for Major Thomas’ promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, and yet the organization disregarded his desires. Establishing a preference is only one aspect within the complex principal-agent relationship.

For example, the PSDM 14-19 states “selects are prohibited from enrolling,” but does the CSAF and the organization actually enforce this decree?<sup>46</sup> To test the enforceability of his recent statement, several Lieutenant Colonel *selects* went and tried

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<sup>45</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

<sup>46</sup>HQ AFPC/DPA, "CY14 Intermediate/Senior Developmental Education Designation Board Nomination Procedural Message and Civilian Developmental Education and Civilian Strategic Leader Nomination Call," ed. AFPC (Randolph AFB, TX2014), 9.

to enroll into correspondence education after the release of this PSDM release to test and assess the enforcement of the CSAF's statement. Unfortunately, there were no mechanisms that prohibited anyone of them from signing up for correspondence.<sup>47</sup> The reason these individuals signed up was because they felt it was in their best interest for future promotion and career opportunities regardless of what the CSAF said. For instance the PSDM even provides a loop hole for selects and states they must complete if they "have been designated to attend a DE program (e.g. fellowship, AFIT, NPS, etc.)" or if they are "ops deferred in their last year of eligibility and will therefore not attend in residence must complete the DL course to receive IDE/SDE credit."<sup>48</sup> Yet, this example highlights that a preference is merely a desire without incentives and proper monitoring mechanisms. Many in the Air Force will continue to behave according to their preferences, interests, and desires, regardless of CSAF statements. Therefore, if selects can continue to enroll in correspondence, it is logical that the supervisors, senior raters, and the MAF DT will continue to use this as a determinate regardless of the CSAF's expressed desires.

This lack of enforcement creates a conundrum at all levels, from the individual to the MAF DT. Individuals are resistant, but so is everyone else, including the DT, who collectively use this as a discriminator for DE selections. In this way, the DTs are merely a reflection of broader Air Force beliefs. Therefore, if individuals see a personal incentive to resist the CSAF's guidance, then the DT will probably see it the same way. In turn, the MAF DT will resist the CSAF desires, not because they have an intentional

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with SAASS Students, (April 2014).

<sup>48</sup> HQ AFPC/DPA, "CY14 Intermediate/Senior Developmental Education Designation Board Nomination Procedural Message and Civilian Developmental Education and Civilian Strategic Leader Nomination Call," ed. AFPC (Randolph AFB, TX2014), 9.



desire to subvert the CSAF, but because they feel it is in their best interest. These DTs see counter incentives for not following the CSAF's guidance, i.e. the advancement of their future officer. Unless they are incentivized toward new behavior, they will continue to resist. Unfortunately, the CSAF is only focusing on one variable within the principal-agent equation: preferences. After the implementation of this policy the CSAF may experience a slight increase in DT member compliance; however, in the long term he will continue to have resistance because he has failed to truly motivate and incentivize a lasting change that permeates the entire Air Force. Like the CSAF's before him, he too has inadequately addressed the incentives and monitoring of the DTs, mostly because he does not understand principal-agent relationships.

Ultimately, the MAF DT's resistance is not the result of a nefarious scheme or functional parochialism. The MAF DT is not collectively orchestrating a plan to subvert the CSAF's desire to develop future Airmen to lead the Air Force. However, the CSAF and the MAF DT appear to differ in *who* the MAF select as the future leaders, and there is a variation in *when* they decide to develop these individuals. This difference can be highlighted through the type of school and the timing in which the DT designates them. A significant challenge throughout the entire preference process is the communication and transparency of both the principal and agent's interests. Instead, DT members are resorting to their individual and organizational biases, preferences, and internal incentives. Unfortunately, the CSAF provides no clear incentives and fails to enforce the behavior through active monitoring. As a result, the MAF DT resists where it sees benefit. Therefore, they simply default to their own preferences and incentives. They seek to maximize its benefit and minimize its risk. The MAF DT does this by seeking to

propagate its own interests: the advancement of its most qualified functional officers by their own definition. Similarly the research indicates the MAF DT prefers to prioritize the needs of its specific community over the priorities of the overall Air Force.



## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

#### Summary

Officer development is a challenging, intricate, and complex task that requires significant resources, time, and manpower. Although the CSAF is ultimately responsible for officer development, he is unable to accomplish it himself due to the sheer enormity of the task. Therefore, he relies on his delegated functional agent, the DTs, to execute it on his behalf. This thesis used the framework of principal-agent theory to examine the relationship between the CSAF and the MAF DT in their joint pursuit of officer development. In particular, this thesis analyzed whether the MAF DT adhered to and implemented the CSAF's desires in the selection of future Air Force leaders. Second, it explored what explained any potential discrepancy between the CSAF's intent and the MAF DT's execution.

Specifically, this thesis asked: *was there consistency between the Air Force vision and the functional Mobility Air Force Developmental Team selection process, particularly in regard to the IDE and SDE designation process? If there are inconsistencies between the two, what explains these differences?* This thesis assessed several components of the DT process and analyzed the wide spectrum of causality in the IDE and SDE selection process. The theoretical framework of principal-agent theory provided the intellectual basis to examine the structural variables within the CSAF-MAF DT relationship. The utilization of principal-agent theory allowed a greater understanding of the complex, diverse, and varied relationship between the two.

This research used principal-agent theory because it is widely accepted in social sciences and it provided a simple, yet measureable model to evaluate complex relationships. Similarly, principal-agent theory has strong relevance to institutional and bureaucratic interactions such as the Air Force.<sup>1</sup> The CSAF-DT relationship is an iterative relationship that behaves more like a dual bureaucratic interaction rather than a simple economic buying and selling model, and is marked by a continual back and forth dialogue between the CSAF and the DT. Therefore, principal-agent is a useful model to examine this institutional bureaucracy and interactions.<sup>2</sup>

Before examining the CSAF-MAF DT principal-agent relationship, it was important to describe and understand the basic intellectual origins and foundations of the DT process. This research explained the historical context surrounding General Jumper's creation of the DT in 2004. Similarly, it discussed the challenges with joint officer and senior leader development, and it explored how the DT process has evolved during the past ten years. Today, there are 28 active DTs. The DTs roles have been adapted as well. For example, the DTs now have four primary roles with regard to officer development: nominating individuals for professional military education (IDE/SDE), boarding officers for squadron command, the steady state vectoring of individuals, and ensuring the overall functional balance and growth of future officers for that career field.

The core purpose of this research was to analyze the CSAF guidance and delegation of the DT process. It examined the CSAF's guidance through his delegated proxies and to the MAF DT. This research assessed the DTs behavior in the absence of clear CSAF guidance. In order to accomplish this analysis, the research focused on three

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<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 262.

<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 9.

process variables: the alignment of preferences between the CSAF and the MAF DT, incentivizing the agent to act in the interests of the principal, and finally monitoring of their behavior.

This work assumed that both the CSAF and MAF DT have the same goal, develop future leaders. This research found the MAF DT to be compliant in the broad execution of the CSAF's intent for officer development. However, within the specific application of the IDE and SDE selection task, the MAF DT had a tendency to resist the CSAF desires. This resistance is highlighted in the DT's propensity to prioritize its own preferences, biases, and experiences over the wants of the CSAF. For example, the exact *who* and the precise *when* they developed these individuals varied. The MAF DT resisted the CSAF's guidance with an inordinate focus and prioritization of AAD and correspondence PME, despite the CSAF's desires. In reality, the MAF DT followed their own preferences because of a lack of CSAF-provided incentives and monitoring. Finally, the MAF DT was compliant in the CSAF's broad intent of developing officers, but resistant in the specific application for the IDE and SDE selection process.

The MAF DT defaulted to their own preferences largely because of absent tangible incentives and enforcement mechanisms to ensure task completion. Instead, the MAF DT members defaulted to individual experience, biases, and chose to satisfy self-interests thereby avoiding functional friction. Therefore, unless the CSAF deliberately uses incentives and monitoring the MAF DT may continue to resist.

Due to this perceived resistance, the current CSAF believes that the functional DTs have too much power and so he is seeking to centralize the IDE and SDE process. Therefore, it appears all the DTs, including the MAF DT, will experience a significant

process change in the next year. The CSAF is looking to modify the DE process, but it also appears he will not make changes to the other components and functions of the DTs. While the future MAF DT IDE/SDE role may diminish, it is likely the MAF DT will remain relevant and influential in steady state vectoring, functional oversight, and the squadron commander selection process.

One may wonder if the CSAF is simply exchanging multiple principal-agent relationships (DTs) for a new centralized principal-agent relationship. While the CSAF may regain some clarity and control over the process, this change might be no more than a return to pre-2004 era of officer development. That era had challenges as well, which led to the creation of the DTs. Therefore, the solution may not be a structural change within the Air Force. Instead, the solution may simply be establishing bi-lateral communication that minimizes preferences gaps, providing clear and tangible incentives to encourage compliance, and monitoring the agent's actions to ensure that they correctly execute the task. The CSAF, as the principal, can delegate to 100 agents or one central agent, yet unless the CSAF addresses these three components all of his principal-agent relationships will continue to exhibit fairly high levels of resistance.

### **Recommendations**

The CSAF is taking steps to centralize the entire IDE/SDE selection process away from the individual DTs and place it under a HAF/A1 managed DEDB. In the immediate future this appears to solve the numerous principal-agent DT relationships by consolidating them into one. However, it simply establishes a new CSAF-DEDB principal agent relationship with the same potential pitfalls. If the CSAF does not minimize the preference gap, maximize incentives, and monitor the DEDB's

performance, then the CSAF will be in the same predicament that he faces with the MAF and numerous other DTs.

Unfortunately, the new proposed CSAF-DEDB principal-agent relationship will probably be as flawed as the current CSAF-MAF DT. Regardless of who the CSAF delegates as the agent, the CSAF must explicitly dictate what he wants the DEDB or DTs to accomplish, he must motivate the agents to accomplish it, and finally he must enforce the task completion. Only, when all these factors happen will the CSAF prevent functionals from going rogue and seeking their own functional priorities over his desires.

Therefore, the first recommendation is to assign officer development a higher priority within the Air Force. The CSAF recently stated, “we don’t have enough bandwidth to deal with these issues (the use of the term bandwidth implies a resource constraint).”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, unless the CSAF makes future officer development a priority, nothing will change and the functional oversight process will continue to be sub-optimized. Unfortunately, the Air Force cannot afford to be cavalier in addressing future officer development. The Air Force already has expensive DE programs and the cost of education is only increasing at a time when the overall force is decreasing (Figure 15). Therefore, the Air Force needs to be extremely deliberate in who, when, and where they develop future leaders.

Moreover, the officer developmental process should include an active dialogue between the CSAF and those that execute his intent. More importantly, it needs to reflect what is realistically achievable within numerous Air Force constraints. This dialogue

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<sup>3</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

must also address differences in principal and agent preferences. One problem with the current relationship is that it is one-sided from the CSAF directed to the DTs. The principal-agent model accurately reflects this one-way and unquestioning policy execution relationship. Principal-agent dictates the policy comes from the top and has to be organized into a hierarchy of obedience. In the theory, the principal-agent relationship demands the agent as a perfect instrument of obedience executing the principal's desires. However, to simply see the DTs as an inert executor of the CSAF's officer development policies in a one-way directive principal-agent relationship is misguided.<sup>4</sup> This is a limitation of the principal-agent relationship. In truth, a symbiotic and iterative organizational relationship between the CSAF and the functional agents could serve to benefit both groups.

Similarly, the actual relationship between CSAF and the senior functional DT leaders needs to include a predictable, tangible, and transparent dialogue on how to develop future leaders. The principal lacks the appropriate resources or expertise to accomplish the task himself, hence the requirement for the agents, experts or specialists to execute the task.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, no one should assume the principal has a perfect decision making calculus. The MAF DT may actually have asymmetric information, and given the opportunity, they could dialogue and provide the CSAF with innovative and tangible changes. The principal outsourced the task to the agent because of a lack of particular expertise. Instead of viewing officer development as a one-way principal-agent policy path that demands unquestioning execution, officer development should be understood as

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<sup>4</sup> Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 112.

<sup>5</sup> Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," 58.



an active and ongoing interchange between the CSAF and the functional agents that execute officer development.

This process should also allow for organizational innovation. The CSAF said, “we can’t afford to continue doing things the same way in the future.”<sup>6</sup> The CSAF needs to not restrain agents but instead empower agents, like the MAF DT, so they can innovate and provide flexible responses to complex force development problems. The CSAF needs to provide a clear commander’s guidance for the DTs to act upon, but also provide proper rewards and punishment to encourage compliant DT behavior. Agents will want to comply as long as they have an incentive.

One radical change would be to prohibit the entire Air Force from completing correspondence, not just selects, until an eighteen month period before that individual’s promotion window. The CSAF wants officer development selections to reflect job performance as the number one discriminator. This solution would prohibit it for the entire Air Force, selects and candidates. Similarly, the CSAF wants to save airmen’s time. The current guidance “saves” the 10 percent select’s time, but it does nothing to “save” the remaining 90 percent of candidate’s time. Likewise, DTs would no longer have the means to examine those discriminators because they no longer exist. This change would require a fundamental modification to the Air Force education and promotion system. As the CSAF stated, “we can’t afford to continue doing things the same way.”<sup>7</sup> This radical innovative may change the entire functional development

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<sup>6</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

<sup>7</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

paradigm and move away from the use of correspondence as a discriminator to delineate officer development.

### **Areas for Future Research**

I propose additional research in two areas. First, I propose the examination of other DTs beyond the MAF DT. Bureaucratic institutions are a “nexus of numerous principal-agent relationships.”<sup>8</sup> Instead of a sole relationship, large institutions like the Air Force face a myriad of principal-agent relationships that can often conflict and overlap in roles and responsibilities. The CSAF-MAF DT interface is a single instance of those varied and diverse relationships. This research focused on only one of 28 different DTs. However, studying all the other independent and complex DT relationships could amplify, explain, and potentially help codify the potential solutions to enhance and address problems with Air Force officer professional development process.

Second, it appears that the CSAF has decided to push toward a centrally managed force development process for IDE and SDE selection. If the CSAF drives towards a single DEDB process, what are the implication and potential loss of functional oversight and input on future officer development? General Jumper determined a need and created the DTs because the Air Force lacked this functional oversight. Is the current CSAF over-acting to the DT resistance? Does the proposed centralization rectify the problem, or simply step back to the officer development issues that plagued General Jumper? Humans tend to oscillate on a pendulum, between old problems and new solutions. When new solutions no longer work, humans often court old problems. Before pursuing

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<sup>8</sup> Lane, *Public Administration and Public Management: The Principal-Agent Perspective*: 27.

a consolidated board, a deliberate second research project should study the benefits and consequences of such a change.

Third, this research studied the CSAF-MAF DT relationship according to the principal-agent model. A basic principle of the principal-agent theory is right of the, “principals to be obeyed even when they are wrong.”<sup>9</sup> However, what if the CSAF has it wrong with regard to officer’s development? What if his preferences for selecting future officers are incorrect, and the functionals’ vision is correct. The Chief is human, makes errors, and his perspective, although broad, is limited to his eyes. Maybe the CSAF’s preferences are flat out both incorrect and unattainable within the bureaucratic constraints of the Air Force. This model may not precisely fit this case in every respect. Therefore, another area of research would be to examine if the functionals have a more precise and realistic organizational perspective for development and include both AAD and correspondence as future officer development litmus tests.

The purpose of this final chapter was to provide a research summary, recommendations and areas of further study. No CSAF has the time nor the resources to attend to the many details in the development of mid-career officers. Therefore, functional DTs accomplish officer development on his behalf. However in this delegation, this research highlighted the MAF DT was often resistant to executing the Chief’s guidance. This resistant MAF DT behavior is potentially indicative of a larger functional resistance across the entire Air Force organization. As General Welsh stated, “the functionals lead the Air Force because commanders fail to lead.”<sup>10</sup> Yet, the preponderance of this burden resides with the CSAF. Ultimately, it is his opportunity

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<sup>9</sup>Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003). 298.

<sup>10</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

and challenge to address the “excessive rise of the functionals” within the Air Force.<sup>11</sup> As such, any potential solution should correspond to the levers of influence in the principal-agent relationship. These levers should link and employ salient and durable preferences, tangible incentives that incorporate both rewards and punishment, and finally implement a monitoring arrangement that ensures compliance. Only when all these components are intricately linked will the CSAF have a successful and fully functioning officer development process.



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<sup>11</sup> CSAF Speech, "School of Advanced Air and Space Studies," April 2014.

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It is a significant challenge to analyze a process that is heavily intertwined with the Air Force promotion process. It involves individuals' careers and both members and organizations are hesitant to share that knowledge, data, and information. Moreover, there is not a lot of past written documentation that explores the Developmental Team process. As a result, I obtained a significant portion of my information from oral history. This research is the result of twenty-two interviews, numerous email correspondences, and policy document sourcing. Included in this list of interviews was the past four MAF DT board chairs. My interviews were not just of senior MAF DT and A1 representatives because these interviews might only provide a one-sided perspective of the DTs. Rather, I interviewed DT panel members and data managers to validate the entire DT process. I conducted interviews on the subject background and allowed the individuals to speak freely with an appropriate level of anonymity. Many individuals spoke candidly about the process, but some preferred their specific quotes not be used. Therefore I cite the interviews in the research; but intentionally leave the interview documentation vague to prevent attribution to a specific individual. Without this degree of individual protection, I would not have received the comprehensive information otherwise.

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